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The Open Voice: Vocality and Listening in three operas by Luciano Berio

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Patricia Mary Clare Brady, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:

February 1st 2017

Abstract

The human voice has undergone a seismic reappraisal in recent years, within musicology, and across disciplinary boundaries in the humanities, arts and sciences; ‘voice studies’ offers a vast and proliferating array of seemingly divergent accounts of the voice and its capacities, qualities and functions, in short, of what the voice *is*. In this thesis, I propose a model of the ‘open voice’, after the aesthetic theories of Umberto Eco’s seminal book ‘The Open Work’ of 1962, as a conceptual framework in which to make an account of the voice’s inherent multivalency and resistance to a singular reductive definition, and to propose the voice as a site of encounter and meaning construction between vocalist and receiver. Taking the concept of the ‘open voice’ as a starting point, I examine how the human voice is staged in three vocal works by composer Luciano Berio, and how the voice is diffracted through the musical structures of these works to display a multitude of different, and at times paradoxical forms and functions. In *Passaggio* (1963) I trace how the open voice invokes the hegemonic voice of a civic or political mass in counterpoint with the particularity and frailty of a sounding individual human body. *Un re in ascolto* (1983) presents the open voice in the multitude of sounding, singing and performative voices of the opera house tradition, their potential aesthetic and interpersonal capacities, and their construction in each individual listening encounter. *Altra Voce* (1999) frames the open voice in the complex interactions of voice with written text, and their seemingly paradoxical intersections with time, location and memory. I consider the usefulness of this model of the open voice in musicological terms, and review the importance of looking to musical practice, both historical and current, to inform our constantly evolving understanding of the human voice, and its place and role in music.

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Introduction

In 2014, as part of their annual conference, the American Musicological Society hosted a colloquy of scholars and researchers from various quarters of musicology to discuss the question ‘Why Voice Now?’¹ In considering the current situation of voice studies in the musicological landscape, contributions came from a range of disciplinary directions; from pop-, ethno- and historical musicology, and employing perspectives and methodologies from post-structural phenomenological critique to spectrographic analysis.² The diversity of these papers reflects both the increasing interest being paid to the human voice as an object of academic attention in recent years, and the wide array of seemingly divergent accounts of the voice and its capacities, qualities and functions, in short, what the voice *is*. In the introductory remarks to the published proceedings of the day, Martha Feldman deftly outlines the challenges facing the musicologist or theorist wishing to address themselves to ‘the voice’, or to make an account of what a thing the voice might be.

Try to imagine a zone without clear boundaries or strict divisions. Were we able to strip away speech, poetry, phonetics, morphology - all of language, in short – we might have the pure terrain of the thing we call voice. For what would we be left with? Resonance, timbre, phonation. The vocalise, the vowel, the scream, the sigh, the cry, the gasp, the om...In what follows we negotiate this question in different ways, thinking of voices of different kinds: theoretical, pragmatic, psychic;

¹ “Why Voice Now?” Joint formal panel presented at the 2014 Annual Meeting of the American Musicological Society and the Society for Music Theory, Hilton Hotel and Milwaukee Convention Center, 6-9 November 2014; Martha Feldman, organizer; panelists: James Q. Davies, University of California at Berkeley, Nina Eidsheim, UCLA, Martha Feldman, University of Chicago, Brian Kane, Yale University, Steven Rings, University of Chicago, Emily Wilbourne, CUNY Graduate Center.

² Martha Feldman, ‘Colloquy: Why Voice Now’, in *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 68/3, (2015), 653–685.

linguistic, sonic, physical. Whatever congeries of things we may find voice to be, it remains various and refractory to explanation.³

For a historical perspective on these enquiries, let us rewind over fifty years to 1963, Milan, and the activities of a loosely allied group of writers, musicians and intellectuals, grappling in their own ways with similar questions as to the nature of the voice, of words, sound, language, meanings and expression, seeking to understand and interrogate the very materials through which these artists created, performed and communicated their ideas to an audience, a spectator, a listener or a reader.⁴ The philosophy and aesthetics of the self-styled 'gruppo '63', which included poets, playwrights and the young composer Luciano Berio, were encapsulated by the semiotician and historian Umberto Eco in what became a quasi-manifesto for the group, the book *Opera Aperta* (1962) or *The Open Work*.⁵ In it Eco outlined an aesthetics of 'openness' in which the receiver of the artwork plays a collaborative role in its construction and understanding, bringing her own unique set of experiences, perceptions and sensibilities to the material to 'complete' the work, creating a new 'performance' of the work in each event of its reception. This radical reconfiguration of the relationships between artist, artwork and its 'receiver' characterised the provocative avant-garde work of these artists, and not least the musical and vocal explorations of composers and musicians Luciano Berio and Cathy Berberian. For the composer Berio, aspiring as he did to nothing less than a radically new form of Italian opera, the human voice was subject to an unflinching interrogation in his compositions, an explosion of the traditional preconceptions of an Italianate operatic legacy, and an invitation to the listener to form his own perceptions and understandings of what he hears. Here, the voice becomes not a closed sonic object, but an open encounter between vocalist and listener, a space of collaborative meaning construction in which the listener's perception of the voice resonates alongside the composer's instructions and the vocalist's performance to create a multifaceted, dynamic 'voice'.

It is from this intersection of Umberto Eco's description of the 'open work' and the self-conscious dissections of the voice in Berio's vocal works that the image of the 'open voice'

³ Martha Feldman, 'Why Voice Now?', in *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 68/3 (2015), 653.

⁴ Paulo Chirumbolo, Mario Moroni, 'Literature and Art in the 1960s: An Introduction', in Mario Moroni, Luca Somigli, Paulo Chirumbolo eds., *Neoavanguardia: Italian Experimental Literature and Arts in the 1960s* (Toronto; London: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Renato Barilli, *La neoavanguardia italiana: dalla nascita del "Verri" al fine di "Quindici"* (Bologna: Società editrice il Mulino, 1995).

⁵ Umberto Eco, *The Open Work*, trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

emerges, a paradigm of plurality, complexity, and listener collaboration in the construction of the voice in each instance of its ‘performance’ and perception.⁶ I propose that the paradigm of vocal encounter found in Berio’s works deliberately incorporates and displays the voice’s inherent multivalency and infinite associative meanings into the musical and aesthetic fabric of the composition, offering an essentially ‘unfinished’ voice to the listener for completion, in the mode of the ‘work of art’ of Umberto Eco’s original essay on this subject, ‘la poetica dell-opera aperta’, or ‘The poetics of the open work’. Here, Eco argues that indeed all artworks can be viewed as ‘open’ in the sense that each performance demands a new and unique psychological response on the part of the performer or listener; what distinguished the works of contemporary composers and artists was their self-consciousness of this element of contingency and uncertainty in artistic creation, and their deliberate incorporation of it into the structure of their works.

At this point one could object (with reference to the wider meaning of ‘openness’ already introduced in this essay) that any work of art, even if it is not passed on to the addressee in an unfinished state, demands a free, inventive response, if only because it cannot really be appreciated unless the performer somehow reinvents it in psychological collaboration with the author himself [...] In fact, rather than submit to the ‘openness’ as an inescapable element of artistic interpretation, he subsumes it into a positive aspect of his production, recasting the work so as to expose it to the maximum possible ‘opening.’⁷

In the same way as the work of art in Eco’s treatise, the voice, with its complex intersection of temporal, tangible physicality with the abstractions of linguistic text, musical meaning, emotional expression, and all of the other infinitude of resonating associations, elicits from the ‘addressee’ of any vocal performance a ‘free inventive response’ in each instance; the works of Berio and a great many other composers, writers, poets, musicians and sound artists of the last fifty years embrace and display this ‘unfinished’, open aspect of the voice as crucial to their work. This aspect of musical and artistic practice from over the last half-century offers present-day scholars of musicology and voice studies a useful paradigm through which to view the voice’s troublesome resistance to ‘clear boundaries or strict

⁶ The ‘performance’ references Eco’s own theory that each perception of an artwork, whether visual, literary or musical, is a renewed ‘performance’ of that work. ‘Hence, every reception of a work of art is both an interpretation and a performance of it, because in every reception the work takes on a fresh perspective for itself.’ Umberto Eco, ‘The poetics of the open work’ in *The open work*, trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1989), 4.

⁷ Eco, *The open work*, 5.

divisions'; one that exemplifies Martha Feldman's observation that 'whatever congeries of things we may find voice to be, it remains various and refractory to explanation'; it is a paradigm that I have loosely termed the 'open voice'.

The 'Open Voice' – A Thesis

My thesis is situated in the territory between Berio scholarship and the currently expanding field of voice studies. From the vantage point of our diverse and diffracted present-day view of the human voice, I will examine four of Berio's vocal works which stand as exemplars of a wider aesthetic, musical and cultural shift regarding the performative voice that occurred in post war avant-garde artistic practices: *Sequenza III per voce femminile* (1965); *Passaggio* (1963); *Un re in ascolto* (1983); and *Altra Voce* (1999). In the course of this exploration, I will show that this period represents a significant historical point of aesthetic reconfiguration of voice, in which the voice was seen not simply as a vehicle of expressive will, but a site of meaning construction between vocalist and listener, in effect an 'open work' in which the receiver is as much a collaborator in their experience as the vocalist, creator or composer. The following chapters examine the musical means whereby these works self-consciously foreground and interrogate the sounding voice, questioning each of its assumed qualities and capacities inherited from operatic tradition, such as the voice as vehicle for musical 'beauty', for characterful expression and communication, as a servant of words, language or meaning, or of an absent authorial will, or as an index of 'authenticity' or unique, performative presence. Each chapter tests these alternative perspectives on the performative voice against the positions of key philosophers and theorists, whose work is either contemporaneous with Berio's original compositions, or offer a valuable retrospective critical view of the voice in these works. From this intersection of theory and musical, compositional and performative practice emerges a variety of accounts of the voice in a musical context; while none is by any means definitive, the multiplicity of 'voices' presented in these works by Berio pre-empts our present critical position as regards 'voice studies', in some cases by half a century.

As such then, the diffracted, multiple and at times paradoxical accounts of voice that are to be found in this avant-garde historical repertoire have much to demonstrate and add to the canon of 'voice studies' about the sounding voice's presence, meaning and construction in performed vocal music. At the same time, these perspectives have much to contribute to the widening of Berio scholarship and to an awareness of the complexities of the voice's positioning, presentation and activation in the creation and performance of Luciano Berio's vocal works. The remainder of this introduction gives a critical overview of the situation of the voice and vocality in musicological discourse, and in wider cultural debates. In stark contrast with the explosions and dissections of the voice enacted through musical and compositional practice over a period of fifty years, I will trace the historical trajectory of music scholarship from its view of the voice as a flattened, secondary musical parameter, towards a more recent 'vocal turn', leading to a more nuanced, multivalent account of the performative musical voice, and will explore the wider disciplinary perspectives now being offered on the performative voice in the areas of pop- and ethnomusicology. I will review the gap between this unfinished, open and diverse understanding of the human voice as found in Berio's musical practice, and the historically closed discursive accounts of voice in wider musicology.

The following four chapters of this thesis examine in turn four works composed by Luciano Berio, exploring how each work interrogates the human voice in a performative musical setting. Chapter 1 looks to Berio's seminal 1965 vocal piece *Sequenza III for female voice* as a demonstration of the 'open voice' in a composed work, and considers how the work offers the voice as essentially 'unfinished', ultimately reliant on the perceptions of the listener to construct her own vocal 'meaning'. I will trace how the work emerged from a cultural and historical moment of profound questioning among writers, artists and musicians of the European post-war avant-garde, and their explorations into the phenomena of physical speech, voice and listening, as they interrogated the seemingly fixed relationships between sound, word, meaning and self by means of stage plays, novels, song, opera and poetry. Such a vibrant interaction of intellectual thought and questioning of the intersections of voice, expression and meaning, occurring in the crucible of an Italianate vocal and operatic tradition created the conditions for a radical engagement with the traditions of classical vocal music and a re-configured understanding of the sounding voice in a musical context. Chapter 1 examines musical scholarship's historical tendency to downplay and overlook the voice's myriad resonating 'meanings' in performed music, relegating it to the role of a textual and semantic vehicle; an overview of the musicological literature associated with

Sequenza III provides a case study for highlighting the ‘gap’ between the ‘open’, resonating voice of musical practice, and the flattened discursive accounts of musical scholarship.

Chapter 2, an exploration of Berio’s first opera, *Passaggio* (1963), reveals a complex engagement with the material and physical particularity of the sounding voice and its presentation as an index of individual presence and resistance in the face of overarching political and social structures. Even the sounding voice in its apparently irreducible, unique physical presence can yet resonate with signifying overtones, absorbing and communicating references and meanings beyond itself to the willing listener, while presenting a provocative challenge to those listeners expecting a more traditional operatic experience. Sanguineti and Berio’s composition drew on Marxist critical perspectives on societal, political and capitalist structures to critique the very practice of operatic performance and consumption. Key to this critique was the interrogation of the sounding voice as a passively received spectacle by a bourgeois opera audience, tangibly putting on stage otherwise abstract theoretical concepts such as that of Guy Debord in his description of ‘The Society of the Spectacle’.⁸ This self-conscious interplay of the unique, performative presence of the performer’s physical body and voice with abstracted political and aesthetic ideas, to enact or demonstrate otherwise ephemeral concepts owed much to the Marxist theatre practices of Bertolt Brecht; the integration of such practices into the context of opera and music theatre, was an innovation of the post-war generation of *neoavanguardia* artists. The account of voice that emerges in this piece of music theatre is, like the opera itself, essentially open in form, relying on the receiver to plot her own path of comprehension through the myriad references and deferred meanings suggested by the evocative vocal sound; inhabiting a number of simultaneously opposing positions, whether political, personal, aesthetic, musical or dramatic.

The complexities of linguistic meaning, communication and expression were the subject of critical philosophical appraisal among a generation of French philosophers at a similar time to the Italian *neoavanguardia*, that included Jacques Derrida, Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva. Post-structuralist thought, phenomenological philosophy, even literary theory, all reflected a growing sense of voice as a site of plurality, pre-figuring musicology’s more recent shift towards a plural, diffracted perspective on vocality in music. Such a shift is reflected in Chapter 3’s analytical exploration of Berio’s most performed and arguably most conventionally composed opera, *Un re in ascolto* (1983). With a libretto developed

⁸ Guy Debord, *The society of the spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994).

by poet and novelist Italo Calvino, who in turn based his narrative on an essay by Roland Barthes, the piece offers a kaleidoscopic array of literary, philosophical and cultural references, meditating on the theme of listening and the intersubjective encounter that occurs between vocalist and listener in the moment of utterance and audition. The work progressively dismantles and interrogates the traditional constructions and understandings of the voice in opera, from character representation by voice types, to fragmentation of linguistic meaning, even to the vocal singing technique used by trained operatic singers, exposing all of these elements as constructed signifiers that accrue around the voice to indicate authenticity and subjectivity within the frame of an operatic idiom. The post-structuralist approach of Barthes to the interaction of the voice, listening and systems of signification drew in turn on the psychoanalytic explorations of Sigmund Freud and Jacques Lacan to explore the interpersonal dynamics of hearing a sounding voice; the opera allows these ideas to be transferred from the abstract referentiality of the essay to the lived physical reality of a sounding voice resonating between the bodies of vocalist and listener. In presenting a meditation on the voice, and its corollary, listening, in such a fragmented, non-linear and 'open' way, what emerges is no single account of 'the sounding voice' but rather a site of 'openness' and meaning construction between the vocalist and listener.

Derrida's essay 'Voix et phénomène' was published in 1963, the same year as the first performance of Berio's *Passaggio*. The issues discussed in this essay, of the experience of hearing a voice, whether one's own or another's, are explored too in Berio's 1999 work *Altra Voce*. In Chapter 4, I draw on Derrida's essay to articulate the complexities of the experience of hearing a voice in performance, an experience that I researched directly by performing Berio's piece myself. What the performance of *Altra Voce*, and the perspectives offered by Derrida's phenomenological enquiry highlighted are the dynamic, oscillating and at times paradoxical relationships between the sounding voice, linguistic meaning, time and one's own memory and perception of the vocal event. What emerges is a paradigm of the open voice, where the voice is understood not as a defined entity but as a territory in which sound, language, text, meaning, comprehension and time coincide and continually interact. At the same time, the voice is presented as a means whereby the vocalist experiences her own discrete self, in hearing her own voice, the resonating 'inner voice' of internal monologue bridging the apparently impermeable boundary between the 'inner' and 'outer world', between the experience of physically bounded interiority and material, resonating, expanding presence beyond one's own body. These apparent

paradoxes of lived experience are deftly demonstrated in *Altra Voce*, presenting a voice that is not simply one voice but a multitude of ‘other’ voices, the voice of inner experience, the voice heard and understood by the listener, the voice as it exists in ‘real’ time, the voice of memory, and of anticipation; as such the work deploys the voice’s ‘openness’ to different forms.

Following on from these analyses of the voice in these works of Berio as plural, ambivalent, and open to listener construction, I will propose that the paradigm of the open voice, as demonstrated in these works of Luciano Berio, has much to offer to scholars of musicology approaching the voice in other musical works, to widen and deepen the conversation around the function and understanding of the human voice in relation with music, and I will propose possible future directions for research suggested by the methodological paths opened up by this thesis. Finally, I will explore some contemporary instances of experimental vocal works, and consider how the open voice is constantly explored, renewed and reconfigured in the works and practices of today’s artists and performers, showing the fruitful dynamic tension between exploratory *récherches* in the irreducible moment of music performance, and the multifaceted reflections of musicological and critical discourse.

Musicology, Opera Studies and the Voice

The active enquiry into the materiality and aesthetics of the sounding voice that is played out in these Berio works, reflecting as it does the centrality of the vocal sound to so many aspects of musical creation and performance and indeed, to human experience, has not generally been echoed in the musicological discourse contemporary with the works examined. Conventional musicological study, from the decades spanned by these works, that is from the 1960’s to the end of the 1990’s tended towards a focus on the musical score as the proper object of investigation, with scant interest paid to the material bodies and sounds creating each performance of these works. To consider this intellectual culture alongside the musical practices of the avant-garde vocal works explored in this thesis is to observe a marked ‘gap’ between a radically diffracted, embodied and interrogative musical practice, and the flattening discursive practices of musicological enquiry. Such a gap between discourse and practice is not necessarily a failure of

understanding or articulation - indeed such a distance and separation is arguably a strength and a necessity in the relationship between the two - nonetheless musicological discourse did little at this time to reflect the complex questioning of the voice by these vocal works and their performances.

The history of the voice in the conventional musicology of these years, is effectively an account of the voice as a bearer of meaning, and as vehicle for an abstract authorial intention. We will see in Chapter 1, taking the seminal *Sequenza III for female voice* as a case study, how musicological literature dealing specifically with Berio's vocal work gave scant attention to the voice's myriad potential capacities and meanings, instead focussing on the textual and musical construction of the vocal lines, or on the narrative and character construction implied by the sung text or the 'erratic' vocal behaviour specified in the score. István Anhalt's 1984 key analytical work examines the vocal behaviours in Berio's *Sequenza III*, concluding that the fractured text and unusual vocality describe the character of a woman in the throes of a psychotic episode.⁹ Such a prescriptive interpretation recalls standard operatic depictions of the aberrant 'madwoman', from Purcell's 'Bess of Bedlam' to Donizetti's Lucia to Strauss' Salome and beyond, suggesting that while the voice's technical means of projection might change, its roles and functions as a bearer of pre-conceived narrative and character trope remained, within musicology at least, narrowly unaltered.

In contrast with the vibrant and at times provocative avant-garde musical practices of the 1950s, '60s and '70s, musicology concerned itself with increasingly forensic analyses and deconstructions of musical compositions and manuscripts, seeing the musical 'work' as residing in the discrete, self-referential and unassailable form of the work's written score. Even into the '80s, the sounding voice was not considered a particularly significant factor in the study of musical works. Its sound and timbre, like that of all sounding instruments in the performance of these works, were for example described by Leonard Meyer to be 'secondary parameters' to the primacy of the musical score; indeed, the act of musicians' 'interpretation' of works posed

⁹ István Anhalt, *Alternative voices: essays on contemporary vocal and choral composition* (Toronto; London: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

a danger of inaccuracy, or otherwise diverging from the authorial purity of a musical text.¹⁰

While it is fair to acknowledge that the wider trajectory of cultural and critical studies has in recent decades moved towards more multiple and diffracted accounts of the human voice, and that this momentum is being felt in various quarters of musicology's approach to voice studies, nonetheless the main body of musicological scholarship on Berio's vocal works still betrays its cultural roots, largely avoiding questions of the material voice's centrality and importance in these works in favour of more analytical, positivistic and score-based discussion. A review of the most recent gatherings of Berio scholars at the *Dramaturgie musicale contemporaine en Europe* (DMCE) study group of l'Université de Paris over three years reveals this cultural reluctance to engage with the voice, even when the objects of study are his dramatic stage works, in which, presumably, the human voice is a key element.

Such approaches reflect perhaps an ingrained cultural tendency, but this is by no means to suggest the complete story of the study of the material voice within the disciplinary boundaries of opera studies and musicology in more recent decades. The advent of wider, interdisciplinary perspectives into musicology, such as popular musicology, performance studies, psychoanalytic philosophy, gender and queer theory and post-colonial studies offer scholars of musicology, of the sounding voice, and in particular the voice's role and importance in Berio's vocal compositions, a greater array of critical and methodological approaches to these works. With the rise of queer theory and feminist theory offering new perspectives on previously overlooked aspects of musical history and practice, the 1980s and 1990s saw a sea change in musical scholarship. The sounding, embodied voice of vocal music and opera came to the fore as a legitimate object of study in the works of writers such as Susan McClary, Carolyn Abbate, Suzanne Cusick and Catherine Clément, arguing as they did for a feminist re-reading of the Western classical music canon through the bodies, voices and stories of classical music, opera, and

¹⁰ Leonard B. Meyer, *Style and music: theory, history, and ideology* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1989), 14-16.

its performers.¹¹ Queer theory too instated the voices and bodies of singers, performers, musicians and listeners at the centre of critical attention, as writers such as Wayne Koestenbaum and Sam Abel re-considered issues of gender, sexuality, identity and desire in the context of classical music and opera.¹² Many of these commentators drew on the legacy of continental psychoanalytical and post-structural perspectives on voice, body, text and expression in constructing their accounts of the voice in music and opera. Mladen Dolar's and Michel Poizat's accounts of the operatic voice as autonomous 'voice-object', detached from the body that produces it and definable only in negative terms owes much to the writings of Jacques Lacan and Jacques Derrida, while Carolyn Abbate's work on the voice in opera draws much from the post-structuralist thought of Roland Barthes and the continental aesthetic philosophy of Vladimir Jankélévitch.¹³ More recently still, the turn of this century saw more nuanced considerations of the sounding voice within opera studies in the accounts of commentators such as Gary Tomlinson and Sandra Corse who traced a history of its role in the formation of identity and subjectivity through operatic performance.¹⁴ Such accounts suggested a greater awareness of the sounding voice and its place in musical and operatic history, reflecting a wider scholarly shift of focus towards the embodied,

¹¹ Susan McClary, *Feminine endings: music, gender, and sexuality* (Minneapolis; Oxford : University of Minnesota Press, 1991); Carolyn Abbate, 'Opera – or the Envoicing of Women', in Ruth A. Solie, ed., *Musicology and difference: gender and sexuality in music scholarship* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 1993); Suzanne Cusick, 'Gendering modern music', in Phillip Brett, Elizabeth Wood, Gary C. Thomas eds., *Queering the pitch: new gay and lesbian* (New York; London: Routledge, 1993); Catherine Clément, *Opera, or, The undoing of women*, trans. Betsy Wing (London: Virago, 1989).

¹² Wayne Koestenbaum, *The Queen's throat: opera, homosexuality, and the mystery of desire* (London: Penguin, 1993); Sam Abel, *Opera in the flesh: sexuality in operatic performances* (Boulder, CO; Oxford: Westview Press, 1996).

¹³ Mladen Dolar, *A voice and nothing more* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006); Michel Poizat, *The angel's cry: beyond the pleasure principle in opera*, trans. Arthur Denner (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); Jacques Lacan, *Anxiety: the seminar of Jacques Lacan. Book X*, ed. Jacques-Alain Miller; trans. A. R. Price (Cambridge: Polity, 2014); Jacques Derrida, *Speech and phenomena, and other essays on Husserl's theory of signs*, trans. David B. Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press 1973); Jacques Derrida, *Of grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997); Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung voices: opera and musical narrative in the nineteenth century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991); Carolyn Abbate, 'Music: Drastic or Gnostic?', *Critical Inquiry*, March 2004, Vol.30(3), pp.505-536; Roland Barthes, 'The Grain of the Voice', in *Image, music, text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977).

¹⁴ Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical song: an essay on opera* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999); Sandra Corse, *Operatic subjects: the evolution of self in modern opera* (London: Associated University Presses, 2000).

performative aspects of music creation that occurred in the late 1980s and '90s. Debates and discussion of the relationship between the abstraction of the musical 'work' and its embodied realisation in performance continue from the mid-1990s publications of musicologists from Richard Taruskin, Jonathan Dunsby and Carolyn Abbate to the more recent commentaries of Adam Krims, John Rink, and Nicholas Cook.¹⁵

While the expansion of musicological attention onto issues of 'performativity', 'embodiment' and 'presence' in music in these decades was a welcome development, nevertheless accounts of the relationships and intersections between aspects of musical text, performance, expression, communication and listener experience still tended, in many significant works of musicological scholarship, towards descriptive models of reductive binaries, based in the perennial oppositions of physical and metaphysical, abstract and tangible, presence and absence. Within opera studies, the work of key commentators such as Hans Gumbrecht and Carolyn Abbate exemplified this discursive tendency, with essays and articles such as 'The Production of Presence, Interspersed with Absence', and 'Music: Drastic or Gnostic?' setting out their argument in binary terms from the very title.¹⁶ Gumbrecht, in 2005, discussed the focus of musicology, and particularly opera studies, in the context of what he termed 'presence culture' as opposed to the 'meaning culture' which he identified as the dominant mode of musical production and reception. In his essay Gumbrecht proposed that the study of music and opera is not well served by its conventional basis in hermeneutic analysis, suggesting that historically, the business of opera has been one of representation or 'meaning-production', while the traditional mode of reception and study he described as 'meaning identification', or the interpretation of

¹⁵ Richard Taruskin, *Text and Act Essays on Music and Performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995); Jonathan Dunsby, *Performing music: shared concerns* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1995); Abbate, *Critical Inquiry*; Adam Krims, ed., *Music ideology: resisting the aesthetic* (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 1998); John Rink, *Musical Performance: A Guide to Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Nicholas Cook, *Beyond the score: music as performance* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

¹⁶ Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, 'Production of Presence, Interspersed with Absence: A Modernist View on Music, Libretti, and Staging', trans. Matthew Tiems, in Karol Berger and Anthony Newcomb, eds., *Music and Aesthetics of Modernity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), 343-55. See also *The Production of Presence: What Meaning Cannot Convey* (Stanford University Press, 2004).

meanings embedded in the libretto, musical text, and dramatic narrative of the work. In order to interrupt this self-perpetuating intellectual game, Gumbrecht suggested focussing attention on the concept of 'presence' within music and opera, denoting the tangible, sonorous, experiential aspects of a musical performance, rather than its representational value. He proposed that a new emphasis on 'presence' should be a guiding principle for producers of opera; he suggested strategies such as the removal of surtitles to redirect audience attention from the 'meaning' based libretto to the sensuous interplay of the voices onstage, or the creative use of lighting to highlight the 'present-ness' of the singers onstage.

While acknowledging 'presence culture' as an important and integral aspect of the operatic and musical experience, Gumbrecht proposed that it should not replace 'meaning culture' as a dominant mode of production and reception, arguing rather that the equal coexistence of both 'cultures' forms a tension that is essential to the practice of music, and indeed all art forms, arguing that 'it is possible – and intellectually productive – to describe any [...] cultural phenomenon as a combination, however differently structured or proportioned, of elements of both types.'¹⁷

While Gumbrecht argues for the indivisibility of 'meaning' and 'presence' in the performance of music, his discussion of the separate constituents of opera reveals a more traditional, reductive approach to their study, in which each element is accorded the status of existing on either one side or the other of a rigid binary delineation. Thus in his discussion of the concept of 'presence' as exemplified through the bodies of the performers, or the physical sounds of their voices, or of the concept of 'meaning' that emerges through the libretto or text of the work, these elements remain, like Meyer's 'musical parameters', a series of discrete elements, organised according to a hierarchical dichotomy, further perpetuating an analytical opposition that was his intention to redress. Tellingly, the singing voice receives scant attention in his essay, whether as a site of 'meaning' or physical 'presence', despite its centrality to the production and experience of opera. Carolyn

¹⁷ Gumbrecht, 'Production of Presence', 345.

Abbate's provocative 2005 article 'Music: Drastic or Gnostic?' similarly proposes a model of musical understanding based in an oppositional binary, reducing considerations of the embodied, performative aspects of musical creation to a flattened discursive category, in an essay that reflects more than it challenges the analytical tradition from which it came.¹⁸

Abbate however, did reflect on the voice in her earlier work from 1991, *Unsung Voices: Opera and Musical Narrative in the Nineteenth Century*, in which she addressed the sound of the singing voice as the sine qua non of traditional operatic creation.¹⁹ Here again, her descriptions of the 'voice' in music and opera equate with a rigid binary of matter or idea, characterised by the material, bodily performance of music, what Abbate often refers to as 'the music itself', in sometimes antagonistic relation with the hermeneutic, abstract, 'unsung' musical voices that emerge through the unfolding musical 'narrative'. 'Music', she writes, 'has [...] musical voices that distance us from the sensual matter of what we are hearing, that speak across it.'²⁰ Throughout the book's discussion of the 'voice' in various forms, these binary categories are brought to bear, only to relegate the sounding voice's physical incarnation to a secondary and sometimes problematic role in the creation and reception of this music. She discusses the sounding voice's presence in opera in terms of Italianate cadenzas or extensive melismas, pure wordless singing without the strictures of meaning or abstract linguistic association, moments when the voice's sensual physicality comes to the fore. In Abbate's account, the voice at such moments finds its value in its aspiration to non-physicality, in its approach towards ineffability, free of the constraints of either physical source or hermeneutic mediation, when she describes

A 'radical autonomization' that occurs [...] the sound of the singing voice becomes, as it were, a 'voice-object' and the sole centre for the listener's

¹⁸ Carolyn Abbate, 'Music: Drastic or Gnostic?', *Critical Inquiry*, 30/3 (2004) 505-536.

¹⁹ Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung voices: opera and musical narrative in the nineteenth century* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991).

²⁰ Abbate, *Unsung Voices*, xii.

attention. That attention is thus drawn away from words, plot, character, and even from music as it resides in the orchestra.²¹

Such a 'radical autonomization' is only jeopardised by the reality of the voice's bodily source. Echoing Michel Poizat's example of a soprano who misses a high c", Abbate describes how this 'painful' failure prompts an awareness 'that we witness a performance' - the danger of such an awareness being that 'the 'presence of the performer' may well suddenly emerge to impede the listener's contemplation.'²² The physical voice, the body that produces it, all are acknowledged by Abbate as essential to the realisation of opera, but are nonetheless flattened in her discussions into secondary musical parameters, necessary but sometimes troublesome to the creation of music. Despite her efforts to 're-embody' the study of musical creation and performance, her accounts of the voice seem to reflect still a cultural legacy of vocal disembodiment, and the reductive binary practices of analytical musicology. Michelle Duncan, in her thoughtful 2004 discussion of the physical voice in traditional opera and its place in opera studies, cites Abbate as 'arguably the strongest musicological consideration of voice in opera', but also comments

While Abbate has advocated for a bridge between the musical 'work' and the materiality of performance for some time, her theoretical strategies tend to relegate the voice to conceptual extremes in order to avoid grappling with vocal material.²³

The reductive dualism that we see reflected in the work of these writers reflects not just a local or a recent tendency in musicological thought, but rather, according to Gary Tomlinson's survey of the construction of the singing subject in opera and song since the late Renaissance, reflects a deeply embedded and ever widening cultural schism between the material body and the intellectual and spiritual

²¹ Ibid., 10.

²² Ibid., 10.

²³ Michelle Duncan, 'The Operatic Scandal of the Singing Body: Voice, Presence, Performativity', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, Vol. 16, No. 3, Performance Studies and Opera (Nov., 2004), 286.

aspirations to the realm of the 'suprasensible', the 'ineffable' or the divine.²⁴ By his account, the late Renaissance view of the voice in music reflected an Apollonian construction of the universe based on harmony and correspondence, in which mankind resided at the centre point of a cosmic hierarchy, a balancing point between matter and spirit, profane and divine. The voice, as part of this balanced cosmic hierarchy embodied and reflected perfectly this union of spirit and matter in humans, ontologically unified with both the physical body that produces it and the spiritual, metaphysical ideas it conveys. Tomlinson describes the singing voice throughout the history of opera as a means of access to the 'suprasensible', and while this has not always necessarily meant the dismissal of the voice's bodily ontology, since early modernity a schism has appeared and widened between the realms of the material and the metaphysical, leaving the voice in an increasingly isolated and difficult position. The reaction of opera and of opera studies, he argues, has been the tendency to address the voice in its metaphysical and hermeneutic capacities, while dissociating it from its bodily origins. Certainly this seems to be borne out by the examples above of such key contributions to the musicological debate, both in the reductive binarism of their arguments, as well as the avoidance of the voice in its fleshy, phenomenal and irreducible performative aspects.

In 2004, Michelle Duncan 'called-out' musicology's inherent caution around the voice, writing

While fields outside of musicology have begun to take a keen interest in the materiality and audibility of voice, opera studies has given the idea scant attention, as though voice were only a minor feature of the art form. Despite the central role of the singer's body in the production of opera and the production of voice, opera studies persists in thinking of voice as extra-corporeal.²⁵

²⁴ Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical song: an essay on opera* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1999).

²⁵ Duncan, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 285.

In her extensive article, she looks beyond the bounds of music and opera studies, suggesting that the philosophical and cultural impasse of voice's uncertain position between meaning and matter, between abstraction and material presence, could be explored through the mapping of wider critical paradigms onto an operatic context. Opera, she argues, 'calls for a negotiation of discursive systems that fall outside the realm of textuality', providing the ideal forum for exploring 'how a resonant voice acts and how it participates in the creation, disruption or dissolution of registers of meaning independent of linguistic signification'. Beginning with the seminal work of J L Austin on the concept of 'performative utterance', whereby 'to say something is to do something', Duncan explores and critiques the usefulness of this paradigm in a musical context, suggesting that if Austin's aphorism holds true, then to *sing* something must also be to do something.²⁶ She explores the later work of Shoshana Felman and Judith Butler on the actions and effects of uttered speech, in performative, social and political spaces, and traces the intersecting complexities of the critical perspectives of Freud, Lacan, Derrida, Husserl, Austin, Felman, Butler, Abbate and Gumbrecht on the voice and its relation to language, meaning and speech in a performative context.²⁷ Ultimately, Duncan suggests that the discipline of 'performance studies' has approached head on the knotty problem of negotiating performativity through a textually based discursive culture, and that opera studies could benefit from a similar approach. After all, she writes,

'phenomena that are events' are precisely what performance studies addresses without [...] cordoning itself off from theoretical affinities not designed with 'events' in mind. Opera studies might gain by this lead, rather than embracing 'performance' on the one hand while ignoring the scholarship of performance studies on the other.²⁸

²⁶ J. L. Austin, *How to do things with words* (London: Oxford University Press, 1971).

²⁷ Shoshana Felman, *The scandal of the speaking body: Don Juan with J.L. Austin, or, Seduction in two languages*, trans. Catherine Porter (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003);

Judith Butler, *Excitable speech: a politics of the performative* (New York; London: Routledge, 1997)

²⁸ Duncan, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 289.

Beyond Opera Studies: The voice and popular musicology, ethnomusicology, queer, gender and race studies

In approaching the voice in musical performance, Duncan's suggestion of looking beyond the remit of these more conventional, score-based and reductive perspectives leads one towards more recently developed areas of musicological study. The disciplinary expansion and diffraction that occurred within the field of musicology from the 1990s onwards has given rise to a flourishing number of 'sub' disciplines, such as popular musicology and ethnomusicology, and the widening of modes of enquiry and research into a range of intersecting and complementary methodologies, drawing on queer theory, feminist and gender studies, post-colonial and race studies, sociology, performance studies and psychoanalytical theories. While Duncan called on opera studies to embrace wider theoretical affinities to address the non-textual, corporeal aspect of musical creation and performance, the growing field of popular musicology, in which the object of study is very often a recording or a specific performance, in effect 'phenomena that are events' rather than a notated score, saw increasing attention being paid to the voices, gestures and bodies of performers when 'reading' the meanings generated in this music. As Freya Jarman-Ivens wrote in 2011,

In popular music [...] the score is not primary, but the recording; the reading is not primary, but the listening; and the listening reveals many aspects that do not always have standardized forms, such as uses of the voice, or various effects enabled by external technologies.²⁹

This greater tendency towards methodologies of listening, and of considering the corporeal, particular dimensions of music creation gives rise to a greater centrality of the sounding voice in pop musicological enquiry, as it asks questions of pop music's negotiation with technology, with the identity and 'authenticity' of the performer, and with issues of race, gender and sexuality. In describing possible

²⁹ Freya Jarman-Ivens, *Queer voices: Technologies, vocalities, and the musical flaw* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), x.

analytical approaches to the musical 'texts' of popular music, Richard Middleton wrote in 2000,

A textual analysis of lyrics and musical style provides one important methodological trajectory, but meaning is also produced through dialogue within the textures, voices and structures; between producers and addressees; between discourses, musical and other.³⁰

This exhortation to consider the possible dialogues, and disruptions, between multiple layers of structure, texture and meaning in pop music has had fruitful results for the study of the voice and its multiple roles and functions in the performance and creation of music. More commonly than in conventional, 'classical' musicology or opera studies, the ambiguous, multi-layered aspects of a singer's performance, and the role the voice plays in these intersections, is explored. As Simon Frith described in his key work *Performing Rites*,

First [pop stars] are involved in a process of double enactment; they enact both a star personality (their image) and a song personality, the role that each lyric requires, and the pop star's art is to keep both acts in play at once [...] the performer is thus the singer and not-the-singer simultaneously [...] The second complication in the pop singer's enactment of the pop star is that she...is also the site of desire - as a body, and as a person. [...]in performance, then, in the playing of the various song parts, instead of 'forgetting who they are', singers are continuously registering their presence.³¹

These multiple identities at play in the pop singer's performance involve the voice at every level, as Nicola Dibben describes in her essay *Vocal performance and the projection of emotional authenticity*. In this piece, she analyses the presentation of the sounding voice in the recorded 'mix' to elicit an experience of intimacy with

³⁰ Richard Middleton, *Reading Pop, Approaches to Textual Analysis in Popular Music* (Oxford, 2000), 13.

³¹ Simon Frith, *Performing Rites: Evaluating Popular Music* (Cambridge, London, 1996), 212.

the listener, and to indicate the ‘authenticity’ of the singer’s inner thoughts, even as he or she maintains the character required by the song’s narrative:

One of the predominant ways in which the vocal performances of contemporary popular music are understood is in terms of the communication of authentic emotion through that star. Belief in a star's authenticity reflects one of the most prevalent ideologies of music creation and reception, and of the person in contemporary society - the idea that people have an inner private core.³²

In her 2009 book, Dibben delves even more deeply into the complex relationship between the voice and technology in her analysis of the music of Icelandic singer-songwriter and performer Björk. Dibben traces how Björk comments on and mediates her own identity as a pop performer and celebrity, as a woman, a mother, and as an individual human in a technologized world, through the analysis of the interplay between the singer’s own prolific array of vocal timbres and textures, and their mediation through highly complex techniques of recording and production.³³ Serge Lacasse too, in his 2005 meditation on the intersection between the human voice and technology in pop music, describes the voice’s centrality to the process of conjuring the idea of intimacy, and ‘authenticity’ in the encounter between the pop singer and their listener.

Voice is of course central in the articulation of this phonographic narrative. More than just a vehicle for the lyrics, voice acts, through the partial exposition of the singer’s body, as the aural index of the artist’s persona and represented emotions. Song characters, then, live through the singer’s

³² Nicola Dibben, ‘Vocal performance and the projection of emotional authenticity’, in Derek B. Scott, ed., *The Ashgate research companion to popular musicology* (London: Routledge, 2016).

³³ Nicola Dibben, *Björk* (Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 2009).

voices which are phonographically staged with the help of recording techniques.³⁴

Since the 1990s, writers including Lacasse, Dibben, and Joseph Auner have explored in analytical detail the interrelationship between the seemingly direct intimacy of the performer's sounding voice, the creation of a 'narrative' through the singer's words and specific vocal behaviours, and the technological means whereby these effects of narrative and character are achieved. In his 2003 article, for instance, Auner discusses the conscious foregrounding of this technology in some music production, specifically songs by Radiohead and Moby,

that stage these border crossings in particularly vivid ways through the opposition of human voices that are sampled and repeated in the form of constant loops against highly processed or digitally generated speech that sounds as though a machine were speaking to us. More specifically, I am interested in how and why in these songs [...] it is the technological sphere that is made the locus of expression, while the human voices are mechanized, drained of subjectivity, turned into signs that circulate as sub-routines of a larger system.³⁵

Auner describes the unsettling effect of this technologizing of the voice, linking the sound of the voice with an 'authentic' human self, and therefore the disturbing sense of displacement that occurs when it is audibly overtaken by technological processes.

The complex blurring of man and machine through voice and song [...] prefigures a broad range of contemporary music that generates meaning by exploring and destabilizing the borders between authentic human presence

³⁴ Serge Lacasse, 'Persona emotions and technology: the phonographic staging of the popular music voice', in *CHARM: AHRC Research Centre for History and Analysis of Recorded Music*, [website] <<http://charm.cch.kcl.ac.uk/index.html>>, accessed 1st July 2017.

³⁵ Joseph Auner, 'Sing It for Me': Posthuman Ventriloquism in Recent Popular Music', in *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 128/1 (2003), 100.

and the technological. In many areas of recent music, the unaltered human voice has become an endangered species.³⁶

This ideology of the ‘authenticity’ of the singer’s persona and ‘self’ in musical performance, key to popular music studies and to the understanding of the interaction between musicians, singers, producers, and listeners – is central to pop musicology’s exploration of the sounding voice. As with Auner’s exploration of the disruption of the listener’s expectation and experience of the ‘authentic’ sounding voice by technological means, so too can disruptions occur to the meanings generated around vocal models of gender, sexuality and race. Nina Eidsheim’s description of the voice as ‘a technology for selfhood’ echoes this association of vocal sound with something intrinsic to the vocalising person, in a number of studies and articles she has written exploring the perception and association of racialized characteristics in a singer’s vocal timbre.

Vocal timbre is commonly believed to be an unmanipulable attribute, akin to a sonic fingerprint [...] What, then, are we to make of the common notion that a person’s race is audible in her voice? While it has been conclusively demonstrated that many of the physiognomic aspects historically employed as evidence of a person’s race [...] actually evidence nothing more than the construction of race according to the ideological values of beholders, vocal timbre continues to elude such deconstruction.³⁷

The ubiquity of a so-called ‘black sound’ throughout pop and rock singing has been traced by numerous writers, from Richard Elliott in his discussion of Van Morrison’s vocal sound, to Laurie Stras’ exploration of the vocal technique of ‘canonical blues singers’, to Susan Fast’s description of the racialized conventions of backup singing.³⁸ The presence of racialized sonic markers in the singing style

³⁶ Auner, ‘Sing it for me’, 100.

³⁷ Nina Eidsheim, ‘Voice as Action: Towards a Model for Analyzing the Dynamic Construction of Racialized Voice’, in *Current Musicology*, No. 93 (Spring 2012), 9-32.; Nina Eidsheim, *Voice as a technology of selfhood: towards an analysis of racialized timbre and vocal performance*, PhD Thesis, (UC San Diego Electronic Theses and Dissertations, 2008).

³⁸ Richard Elliott, ‘My Tongue Gets t-t-t’: Words, Sense, and Vocal Presence in Van

of white male ‘rockers’ is examined too by Jacqueline Warwick in her analysis of the construction of paradigms of ‘whiteness’ and masculinity through specific vocal technique. In all cases, these writers explore the voice as a site in which a host of meanings around racial identity, heritage, history, experience and identity are generated, activated, and disrupted in the construction of the singer’s apparently ‘authentic’ performance persona.

The concept of vocality as an index or ‘a technology of selfhood’ continues through the work of Sheila Whiteley, Nicola Dibben, Keith Negus, Stan Hawkins and Emma Mayhew, all of whom explore the construction and performance of gender and sexual identities through the sound of the pop singer’s voice. In publications such as *Sexing the Groove* (1997) popular musicologists trace the mechanisms of ‘gendering’ musical performance, central to which is the sounding voice; essays such as Negus’ on Sinead O’Connor, and Stella Bruzzi’s discussion of k.d. lang, analyse the vocal inflections, timbres and behaviours around which are constructed narratives of motherhood, female desire, and femininity.³⁹ Similarly, Sheila Whiteley’s *Women and Popular Music: Sexuality, Identity and Subjectivity*, published in 2000, studies the construction of identity through the folk, rock and pop music of performers from Janis Joplin, Joni Mitchell and Siouxsie Sioux to PJ Harvey, Madonna and the Spice Girls; here again the sound of the voice is examined as means of negotiating and communicating what it is to be a popular musical performer, and a woman.⁴⁰ Similarly, in works from 1997 to 2011, Jacqueline

Morrison’s *It’s Too Late to Stop Now*’, in *Twentieth-Century Music*, 13/1 (Cambridge University Press, 2016), 53-76; Laurie Stras, ‘The Organ of the Soul: Voice, Damage and Affect’, in. Neil Lerner and Joseph Straus, eds, *Sounding Off: Theorizing on Disability in Music* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Susan Fast, ‘Genre, subjectivity and back-up singing in Rock Music’, in Derek B. Scott, ed., *The Ashgate research companion to popular musicology* (London: Routledge, 2016). See also Ronald Radano, *Lying up a nation: race and Black music* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003).

³⁹ Keith Negus, ‘Sinead O’Connor: Musical Mother’, in Sheila Whiteley, ed., *Sexing the groove: popular music and gender* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), 178-190; Stella Bruzzi, ‘Mannish Girl: k.d. lang – from cowpunk to androgyny’, in Sheila Whiteley, ed., *Sexing the groove: popular music and gender* (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), 191-206; Stan Hawkins, ‘Introduction: sensing gender in popular music’, in Stan Hawkins, ed., *The Routledge Research Companion to Popular Music and Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 1-12; Emma Mayhew, ‘The booing of Sinead O’Connor’, in Ian Inglis, ed., *Performance and Popular Music: History, Place and Time* (Ashgate, 2006) 172-187.

⁴⁰ Sheila Whiteley, *Women and Popular Music: Sexuality, Identity and Subjectivity* (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2013).

Warwick and Stan Hawkins reflect on the vocal behaviours in the music of Nickelback, Arcade Fire, Journey, Prince, and the Pet Shop Boys as the negotiation and stylised performance of various models of masculinity and male experience. The sound and timbre of the performing voice as a site for 'queering' or disrupting normative ideologies of gender, sexuality and personal identity forms the basis of a valuable strand of popular musicological research. Works such as Freya Jarman-Ivens' *Queer Voices* (2011) examine in detail how artists' use of specific vocal behaviours and timbres can be read 'against the grain' of aesthetic and cultural discourses, creating what she terms 'queer spaces' between vocalist and listener, where artists can play out multi-layered, liminal identities in collaboration with a listening audience. Specifically, she looks at the vocal performances of Maria Callas, Karen Carpenter and Diamanda Galas, exploring how the ideals of vocal purity and technical perfection are both embraced and rejected by these artists. Galas, in particular, employs the concept of the vocal 'flaw' as a performative strategy in the construction of her performing persona and sound world:

There is a definite sense in a great deal of her work of a commitment to vocal ugliness, including the strategic deployment of vocal flaws, and even if her voice itself is not always overwhelmingly abject and monstrous, then the overall ugliness of the sonic terrain prevails.⁴¹

The relationship of the sounding voice with the construction of the performative identity of a singer is something which emerges from much current pop-musicological research, and offers a valuable perspective from which to approach the construction and constitution of identity through physical vocal presence in the performance of 'classical' repertoire, and resonates with the analytical approach adopted in some of the following chapters. In Chapter 3 for instance, the exploration of the various modes of construction of the operatic performative voice in Berio's opera *Un re in ascolto*, through vocal technique, language, diegetic context and through listener perception, echoes much of the research discussed

⁴¹ Jarman-Ivens, *Queer voices*, 129.

above into the role of accent, timbre and vocal tone in the construction and projection of performers' racial, ethnic and sexual identities of performers. The work of Jarman-Ivens in the deployment of voice and of voices that encompass both highly accomplished technique as well as vocal 'flaw' and ugliness recalls, in Chapter 2, the positioning and use of voices in Berio's *Passaggio* to play out an explicitly political and ethical agenda in the opera house, while research by Joseph Auner and Serge Lacasse into the aesthetic implications of electronically manipulated and generated vocal sounds suggests the usefulness of a similar approach to the recorded and electronically controlled voice in Berio's *Altra Voce*, as I explore in Chapter 4.

Beyond musicology: the 'corporeal turn', performance studies and sound art

Michelle Duncan's rallying cry to musicology and to opera studies to engage with wider 'theoretical affinities' in the consideration of the bodily, non-textual and performative aspects of musical creation reflected a sense of discontent in wider cultural studies, articulated by Maxine Sheets-Johnstone as the problem of a post-Enlightenment intellectual legacy of textuality and the cultural shift towards more embodied modes of knowledge that she termed 'the corporeal turn'.

In her introduction to a collection of essays by various theorists written between 1979 and 2005, she describes a continuous, 'spiralling' field of critical thought whose mission is no less than to reconfigure the fundamental assumptions of European critical thought on the relationships between knowledge, text and the body.

With the corporeal turn however, it was a matter not only of attending to something heretofore simply assumed and largely ignored, but of correcting something misrepresented for centuries. Through its Cartesian legacy, the body was consistently presented as mere material handmaiden of an all-

powerful mind, a necessity but ultimately discountable aspect of cognition, intelligence, and even affectivity.⁴²

In her collection, she brings together texts from numerous different perspectives in the humanities and human sciences, arguing that the ‘corporeal turn’ is characterised by a fundamental conceptual shift across disciplines.

As linked interdisciplinary fields of study, they attest to the importance of exploring the living realities of corporeal life and of understanding in the deepest sense in each instance what it means to be the bodies we are.⁴³

Such a ‘corporeal turn’ can arguably be traced through the cultural and artistic practices of much avant-garde and experimental music and theatre of the later twentieth century, as we have seen demonstrated in this thesis, and more recently has been reflected in the critical and intellectual discourse around such activities, in fields such as theatre and performance studies, literary studies, and studies of art and sound art. This shift towards concepts of embodied ‘performativity’ in theatre studies was highlighted in the 1990s in works such as Parker and Sedgwick’s 1995 *Performativity and Performance*, a collection of essays tracing this intersection of text, language, meaning and performative event in theatre from ‘the age of Aristotle to the age of AIDS’ and articulating a distinct ‘corporeal turn’ in the field of theatre practice and production.⁴⁴

While this ‘corporeal turn’ was finding its way into critical consideration of theatre, speech and ‘performative utterance’, the sounding voice was still subject to the discursive neglect and suspicion comparable to that in musicology and opera studies. Only in quite recent times has this distinction, between speech and voice, between *what* is said and *how* it is said, begun to be loudly and clearly made. Norie Neumark critiques this position of performance studies in her 2010 essay ‘Doing things with voices’ even as she draws out the connections and resonances between

⁴² Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, *The corporeal turn: an interdisciplinary reader*, (Exeter, England: Imprint Academic, 2009), 2.

⁴³ Sheets-Johnstone, *The Corporeal turn*, 8.

⁴⁴ Andrew Parker, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, eds., *Performativity and performance* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

the performative theories of J L Austin and the aesthetic contemplations of voice, art and listening by more contemporary thinkers such as Adriana Cavarero, Walter Ong, Steven Connor, Mladen Dolar and Jacques Rancière.⁴⁵ In presenting the case for the importance of the physical voice in the study of performativity, Neumark quotes Austin when she writes ‘performativity suggests something that doesn’t just describe or represent, but performs or activates - acting as ‘a material force to change something,’ but highlights the perennial emphasis of cultural studies on the text, meaning and content of what is said at the expense of the voice, commenting that ‘theoretical approaches to performativity have focussed not on voice but more on the spoken word and its effects; they have thought about how to do things with words.’⁴⁶

In her introduction to the volume in which the essay appears, Neumark signposts the expanding field of critical attention to the sounding human voice, distinct from words, language and signifying functions, and the paradoxes and challenges it poses in an age of digital media, recorded music, sound art, communication technology, and the accelerating intersection of these phenomena.⁴⁷

Certainly, this concern with the voice’s role in performance and performativity, as distinct from its textual and linguistic functions has gained momentum in recent times with publications such as Eric Salzman and Thomas Dézsy’s *The new music theater: seeing the voice, hearing the body* in 2008, and Lynne Kendrick and David Roesner’s 2011 *Theatre Noise: The sound of performance* bringing together theories and accounts specifically focussing on the sounding voice, in theatre and music

⁴⁵ Adriana Cavarero, *For more than one voice: toward a philosophy of vocal expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005); Walter J. Ong, *Orality and literacy: the technologizing of the word* (London: Routledge, 1995); Steven Connor, *Dumbstruck: a cultural history of ventriloquism* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Mladen Dolar, *A voice and nothing more* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2006); Jacques Rancière *The politics of aesthetics: the distribution of the sensible* (London: Continuum, 2004).

⁴⁶ Norie Neumark, ‘Doing things with voices: Performativity and Voice’ in eds. Norie Neumark, Ross Gibson, and Theo van Leeuwen, *Voice: vocal aesthetics and digital arts and media*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010), 96.

⁴⁷ Norie Neumark, ‘Introduction: The Paradox of Voice’, in eds. Norie Neumark, Ross Gibson, and Theo van Leeuwen, *Voice: vocal aesthetics and digital arts and media*, (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010).

theatre.⁴⁸ The resonating voice in the context of public and performative spaces, and in sound art, and the importance of a collaborative listening on the part of the 'receiver' is the focus of work such as David Toop's 2010 *Sinister resonance: the mediumship of the listener* and Salomé Voegelin's book *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art*; these titles indicate an expanded understanding of the resonating, performative voice as something experienced and constructed within a collaborative listening encounter.⁴⁹ Key to this recently expanded critical awareness of the voice and its multifaceted nature is a profound consideration of listening. The importance of listening, and the experience of voice as constructed and understood in the listening encounter, that is, the 'open voice' of *neoavanguardia* musical practice, is a concept that has gained increasing scholarly attention; alongside these publications, philosophical contemplations of listening and voice such as Don Ihde's updated text *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound: 2nd edition* (2007), Peter Szendy's *Listen: a history of our ears* (2008) and in particular Jean-Luc Nancy's *Listening* (2002) demonstrate the increasing popularity and applicability of theories of listening, vocal sound and intersubjective experience to accounts of the human voice in wider cultural studies.⁵⁰ In the light of this cultural shift towards the voice's location in the bodies of vocalists and ears of the listeners, commentaries such as Brandon LaBelle's *Lexicon of the Mouth: Poetics and Politics of Voice and the Oral Imaginary* (2014) and Steven Connor's *Beyond Words: Sobs, Hums, Stutters and Other Vocalizations* (2014) indicate increasing efforts to extricate the voice from its textual legacy, by focussing here on the non-linguistic voice, the physical, messy, broken, liminal and 'corporeal' aspects of vocal utterance, and their place in culture and human

⁴⁸ Eric Salzman, Thomas Dézsy, eds., *The new music theater: seeing the voice, hearing the body* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Lynne Kendrick, David Roesner, eds., *Theatre noise: the sound of performance* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2011).

⁴⁹ David Toop, *Sinister resonance: the mediumship of the listener* (New York; London: Continuum 2010); Salomé Voegelin, *Listening to noise and silence: towards a philosophy of sound art* (New York; London: Continuum, 2010).

⁵⁰ Don Ihde *Listening and voice: a phenomenology of sound, 2nd ed.* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007); Peter Szendy, *Listen: a history of our ears* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008); Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mandell, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2003).

experience; these books were both reviewed side by side in *Twentieth-Century Music*'s 2016 issue dedicated entirely to discussion of issues of voice and vocality.⁵¹

This 'vocal turn', and its focus on the collaborative experience of the listener, can be seen not just within the arts and humanities but is proving truly cross-disciplinary, as numerous projects in science, medicine, social care and mental healthcare can attest to. The 'Hearing the Voice' project, based at Durham university is a case in point, taking as its starting point 'the experience of hearing voices in the absence of any external stimuli (termed 'auditory verbal hallucinations' in a medical context)'.⁵² What characterises this research as a distinct divergence from a traditional medical model of pathology and treatment, is the shift towards placing any construction of the event within the framework of the hearer's own experience and understanding of it. Thus the 'voice' is understood to be constructed and defined in the listener's own relationship with it; one of the aims of the project is to find how such a reconfigured approach 'can inform the therapeutic management of the experience in cases where clinical help is sought.' Such an approach, in which hearers are encouraged to accept and engage with the meaning or content of 'their' voices has already been implemented in a range of clinical and community settings since the 1990s, through the pioneering work of the 'Hearing Voices Network', a network of clinicians and 'voice hearers' throughout the UK. In their own words,

⁵¹ Brandon LaBelle, *Lexicon of the mouth: poetics and politics of voice and the oral imaginary* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014); Steven Connor, *Beyond words: sobs, hums, stutters and other vocalizations* (London: Reaktion Books, 2014); J. Martin Daughtry, 'Vox Libris: A review essay', in *Twentieth-Century Music*, 13/1 (2016), 153-165.

⁵² 'Hearing the Voice is an ambitious, interdisciplinary research project that aims to provide a better understanding of 'the experience of hearing voices in the absence of any external stimuli (termed 'auditory verbal hallucinations' in a medical context). Usually associated with severe mental disorders such as schizophrenia, voice-hearing is also an important aspect of many ordinary people's lives. The experience has been richly described across cultures and historical eras, and raises profound questions about the neural foundations of language, the nature of thought and the unity of the self...Our research team, led by Professor Charles Fernyhough (PI) and Dr Angela Woods, includes academics from cognitive neuroscience, cultural studies, English literature, medical humanities, philosophy, psychiatry, psychology, theology and arts-in-health. It involves researchers from all three faculties of Durham University, along with clinicians, academics and 'experts-by-experience' from national and international partner institutions, including University College London, the University of Liverpool, and the University of Groningen.' 'Hearing the Voice', *University of Durham* [website] <https://www.dur.ac.uk/hearingthevoice/>, accessed 10th August 2016.

Hearing voices has been regarded by psychiatry as ‘auditory hallucinations’, and in many cases a symptom of schizophrenia. However not everyone who hears voices has a diagnosis of schizophrenia [...] Traditionally, the usual treatment for voice hearing has been major tranquillisers, administered to reduce the delusions and hallucinations. However not everyone responds to this treatment. There are some psychiatrists and psychologists who now work with people who hear voices using talking therapies and exploring the meaning of the voices. Although this is not yet ‘the norm’, this practice is increasing. As the improvement in individuals who are encouraged to talk about their voices becomes more apparent and increasing number of health professionals are beginning to understand that the key to understanding voices lies in the ‘content’ of the voices.⁵³

This shift in medical and clinical attention away from strictly pathologising the experience of hearing voices towards an acceptance of the meaning and content of what is heard, and the importance of the hearer’s own understanding of it, resonates strongly with the wider ‘vocal turn’ throughout the arts and humanities, showing the extent of this far-reaching cross-disciplinary phenomenon.

Musicology and the ‘vocal turn’ – The present state of play

This emergence of ‘voice studies’ and its intersection with music practice and musical scholarship has seen a proliferation of conference events, colloquia, study

⁵³ ‘Beliefs about voices: Everybody has different beliefs about what their voices are and where they come from. Some believe that they are a symptom of their mental ill health, some believe that they are the voices of spirits/gods; some believe they are caused by a trauma in their life. Whatever the belief, accepting your voices is the first step in coping with them, though this can also be the most difficult step to take. We make no claims about what voices are or are not. Everybody is respectful of each other’s beliefs. It is more important to accept the voices are real to you.’ ‘About HVN’, *Hearing Voices Network* [website], <http://www.hearing-voices.org/about-us/> accessed 11th August, 2016; ‘Hearing Voices’, information leaflet produced by the Scottish Association of Mental Health, at *SAMH.org.uk* [website] <https://www.samh.org.uk/media/296074/hearing-voices-booklet-the-hive.pdf> Accessed 12th August 2016.

groups, journal and book publications in recent times, a ‘vocal turn’ in music scholarship that seems to answer somewhat Michelle Duncan’s call in 2004 for greater attention to the sounding voice in musicology and opera studies, and more openness to an interdisciplinary approach to questions of vocality and performativity. Indeed, reviews of Connor’s and LaBelle’s 2015 publications on vocal utterance appear in the Spring 2016 issue of established musicological journal *Twentieth-Century Music*, which was dedicated to the theme of ‘voice’; the articles and book reviews consider the voice and its place in current musicology from an array of disciplinary and theoretical perspectives spanning pop musicology, ethnomusicology and aesthetic and analytical critique.⁵⁴ Another established forum of music scholarship, *The Journal of the American Musicological Society*, dedicated a 2015 issue of its journal to the colloquy ‘Why Voice Now?’ convened at the University of Chicago in 2014, while 2015 also saw the launch of the new *Journal of Interdisciplinary Voice Studies* and the related publication of *Voice Studies: Critical Approaches to Process, Performance and Experience*, which was also reviewed in *Twentieth-Century Music*’s ‘Voice’ issue.⁵⁵ As well as publications, 2015 and 2016 sees a growing number of study days and events within music academia which place music performances alongside scholarly papers, to consider issues of voice, listening and performativity in a practical, active context; in April 2016, Trinity College in Dublin hosted a two day practice based event and ‘Sound Art Festival’ focussed on voice and synthesisers, exploring the interface between them in contemporary musical creation, while the music faculty of Oxford University held ‘a day symposium exploring the politics and spaces of voice and unruly emotions’ in June 2016; the University of London’s Royal Holloway music department held a series of interdisciplinary ‘Listening Workshops’ in 2014, exploring ideas of space, sound, vocal utterance and intersubjective encounter, and

⁵⁴ *Twentieth-Century Music*, Voice, 13/1 (2016)

⁵⁵ *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 68/3 (2015), 653–685; *Journal of Interdisciplinary Voice Studies*, 1/1, (2016), 1–106; Konstantinos Thomaïdis and Ben Macpherson, eds., *Voice Studies: Critical Approaches to Process, Performance and Experience* (New York: Routledge, 2015); also the Centre for Interdisciplinary Voice Studies, inaugurated in 2013 at the University of Portsmouth; also 2015 saw the first issue of their *Journal of Interdisciplinary Voice Studies*.

their relation to issues of voice, music and performativity.⁵⁶ This represents just a small sample of the growing number of publications, activities and events that reflect the widening musicological interest in the human voice, and its intersection with musical practice and performance. As scholarly attention within musicology turns towards the voice, theories, analyses and accounts of what it *is* and what it *does* proliferate, coming from an intersecting array of perspectives as diverse as spectrographic analysis, post-colonial studies, ethnomusicology, film studies and popular music studies, creating not one unified account of the voice, but an increasingly diffracted, complex and plural understanding even as our knowledge of it multiplies.⁵⁷ As Martha Feldman writes in her introduction to the *Journal of the American Musicological Society's* 2015 issue addressing the recent 'vocal turn' of musicology,

Recently, the voices and bodies of the 1990s and beyond have come to encompass popular music, early modern music, instrumental music and the post-colonial other. Nowadays, we might say, voice is 3D. Not just fully embodied, it transcends the conventional body to reveal what is most intimate and nuanced in non-conforming bodies, post-human bodies and even holographic bodies, such that the boundaries of the voice are themselves without evident limit [...] Voice is nothing if not boundless, furtive and migratory, sometimes maddeningly so.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *Ideopreneurial Entrephonics II*, 23-24 April, 2016 A Festival of Sound Art and Electronic Instruments (Freemasons' Hall, Dublin) 'Ideopreneurial Entrephonics II invites scholars and practitioners to explore the synthesized, natural, and modified voice'; *Moving Performances: A day symposium exploring the politics and spaces of voice and unruly emotions*, 23rd June 2016, Faculty of Music, St Aldates, Oxford.

⁵⁷ Stephen Rings, 'Analyzing the popular singing voice: Sense and Surplus', *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 68/3 (2015), 663-70; Nina Eidsheim, 'Voice as Action: Toward a Model for Analyzing the Dynamic Construction of Racialized Voice', *Current Musicology*, 9/93 (2012); Christian Utz and Frederick Lau, eds., *Vocal Music and Contemporary Identities: Unlimited Voices in East Asia and the West* (New York: Routledge, 2013); Caroline Bithell, *A Different Voice, A Different Song: Reclaiming Community through the Natural Voice and World Song* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Laura Tunbridge, 'Scarlett Johansson's Body and the Materialization of Voice', *Twentieth-Century Music*, 13/1 (2016), 139-152; Maarten Bierens, 'Voices, Violence and Meaning: Transformations of Speech Samples in Works by David Byrne, Brian Eno and Steve Reich', *Contemporary Music Review*, 33/2 (2014), 210-222; Richard Elliott, 'My Tongue Gets t-t-t': Words, Sense, and Vocal Presence in Van Morrison's *It's Too Late to Stop Now*', *Twentieth-Century Music*, 13/1(2016), 53-76.

⁵⁸ Martha Feldman 'The Interstitial Voice: An Opening', in *Journal of the American Musicological Society*, 68/3 (2015), 653.

Chapter 1

‘A few words to sing’: Vocality in *Sequenza III per voce femminile* (1966)

Sequenza III for female voice is an unaccompanied chamber work composed by Luciano Berio in collaboration with mezzo soprano Cathy Berberian in 1966. This nine-minute piece encompasses a vast range of vocal sounds, from full-voiced classical singing to speech, muttering and non-linguistic gestures such as sighs, sobs and laughter. Despite its short length, the work remains one of the seminal pieces of twentieth-century vocal repertoire and one of Berio's most performed vocal compositions, requiring a prodigious degree of vocal dexterity and virtuosity of its singer. A glance at any point of the work reveals the extent of the unconventionality of the vocal utterances, the scoring and structure of the work, and the treatment of the text, fragmented almost beyond recognition into phonemes and syllables.¹

¹ The score of *Sequenza III* specifies that it is to be sung by 'a singer, an actor, or both'; singing is only one of the many vocal expressions in the course of the work. The score lists fifteen different techniques for producing sound, including 'bursts of laughter to be used with any vowel freely chosen', 'mouth clicks', 'cough', 'snapping fingers gently', 'dental tremolo', 'tapping very rapidly with one hand (or fingers) against the mouth' and 'trilling the tongue against the upper lip'; as well as forty four different agogic markings such as 'far away', 'ecstatic', 'extremely intense' and 'fading away'. The score also specifies that 'Hand, facial and bodily gestures besides those specified in the score are to be employed at the discretion of the performer according to the indicated patterns of emotions and vocal behaviour (tense, urgent, distant, dreamy etc.) ...they are to be experimented with by the performer herself according to her own emotional code, her vocal flexibility and her 'dramaturgy'. Luciano Berio, *Sequenza III per voce femminile*, (Austria: Universal Editions, 1968); 'Luciano Berio: Sequenza III', *Universal Edition* [website], <<http://www.universaledition.com/Passaggio-Luciano-Berio/composers-and-works/composer/54/work/4088>> accessed 12th March, 2015.

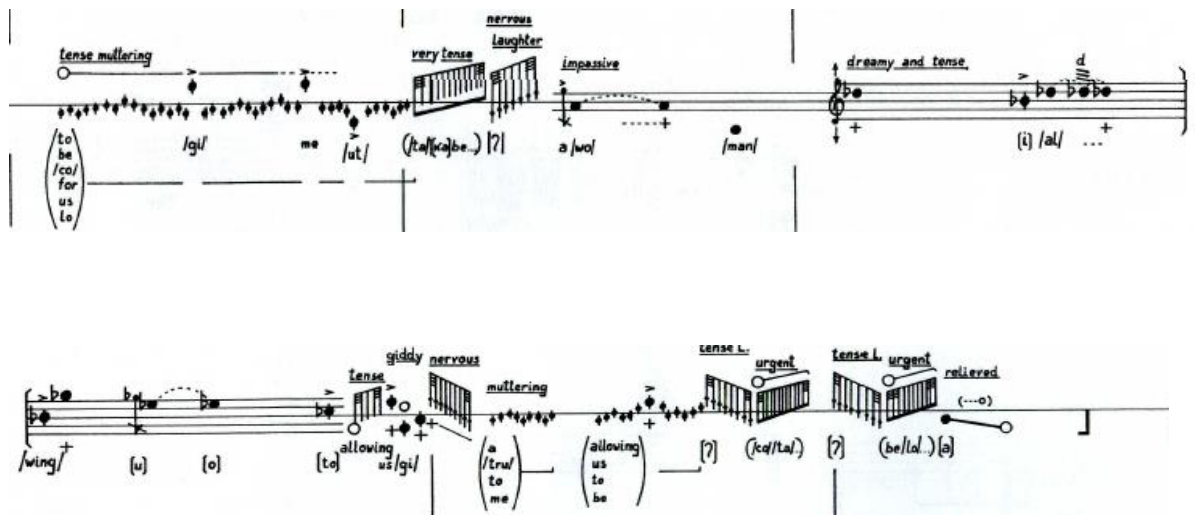


Fig. 1.1: *Sequenza III per voce femminile* (1965) Measures 7 - 11

Within the opening two bars, we can see an explosion of the voice's lexicon that far exceeds the conventional demands of a classical vocal work. The vocalisations switch between conventionally notated classical singing, rapidly ascending and descending scalar coloratura gestures, and the same gestures repeated with the explicit description of 'nervous laughter'. These scales are interspersed with spoken syllables, sounded in pitched speech or in an ordinary speaking voice, sometimes clearly enunciated with a wide tessitura, sometimes reduced to intense muttering, pitched around a cramped one or two note figure, obscuring any coherent linguistic sense or melodic line. The effect is of an unsettling stage invasion, as the conventional territory of the classical singing voice is encroached on by 'ordinary' everyday voices, the voices of speech, shouts or murmuring, of the voice beyond words, of laughter, sighs, hums, coughs, sobs, and of all of the tics and individual peculiarities that make up the vocal content of our daily lives.

As listeners to a piece of classical music, our instinctual reaction is to try to make sense of what we hear, to listen out for coherent musical lines or for semantic meaning in the sung text, a process that is constantly confounded by the rapid shifts and changes between vocal timbre, gesture and texture. In trying to follow the vocal line, our ears pick out the classically sung melody with a degree of relief, poised in anticipation of the next tone in an overall melodic or harmonic scheme, only to be jarred by the sudden sound of guttural speech or muttered words. We try to attune to the content of this speech, straining towards some meaning within the rapid flow of fragmentary syllables, only to be frustrated

by the lack of any semantic coherence. From this kaleidoscopic jumble of disjointed vocal attitudes, sounds and gestures, emerges a new awareness of the voice not simply as a vehicle of prescribed texts, but as the presence of a particular voice, of a specific and separate human self, and of a physically present resonating body in each ephemeral instance of performance and musical realisation. With this awareness comes the reinstatement of the voice's myriad resonances beyond words or language, beyond musical text or operatic character, proceeding in a labyrinthine referential network from the sound of a single individual and the implications of her specific life and experiences, to its wider associations, particular and abstract, innumerable and intersecting, and all constituent of the thing we hear and experience as 'voice'. In his 1995 essay, Italian musicologist Lorenzo Arruga described *Sequenza III* as an 'explosion of the voice' that invokes the full gamut of human life and experiences beyond the musical stage with which the human voice resonates.

The singer has to lay bare her technique; but has to do much more: has to lay bare the voice itself, in its authenticity. *Sequenza III*, of 1965 [sic.], is the explosion of the voice; but the specific voice as it is linked to a person, indeed it cannot be repressed, to be the person, and in this case, a woman. Not [just] the singing voice, detached from its own existence, from its own psychology and physiology, built for a script of music or theatre.²

Through its interrogation of the voice as a musical material, and of the processes of conventional musical listening, *Sequenza III* critiques a classical music recital culture that represses the full resonating implications of the human voice, stripping the voice of any extraneous associations beyond, as Arruga calls it, 'a script of music or theatre'. The musicologist Alessandro Arbo in his 2006 essay refers to the demands of classical singing technique that seeks to eliminate any extraneous vocal gesture or sound from the singer's performance, in rather brutal Darwinian terms, claiming that *Sequenza III* is

² Anche la cantante deve mettere la sua tecnica a nudo; ma deve fare molto di più: deve non-nascondere la voce stessa, nella sua autenticità. *Sequenza III*, del 1965, è l'esplosione della voce; ma lo specifico della voce è di essere legata alla persona, anzi non poter mai essere deposte, di essere la persona, e in questo caso una donna. Non voce da cantante, staccata dalla propria esistenza, dalla propria psicologia e fisiologia, costruita per un copione di musica o teatro. Lorenzo Arruga, 'Per Ascoltare Berio' in *Berio*, ed. Enzo Restagno (Torino: EDT, 1995), 41, trans. author's own.

A staging of this superabundance, of this 'voice residue' eliminated through the natural selection of *bel canto* (but also of *Lieder*, of *Musikdrama* and also to a certain extent, of *Sprechgesang*).³

Arbo suggests that by instating this 'voice residue' into the very material of *Sequenza III* Berio and Berberian

...wanted to show that in the vicinity of listening to one voice...hides the noisy polyphony of a lifetime, an acoustic space as the dominant musical culture would in some measure have cleared or repressed.⁴

Sequenza III stands not simply as an exploration of incongruous vocal sounds in a classical musical context, but effectively questions the 'dominant music culture's' exclusive occupation of the 'acoustic space' between composer, performer and listener, and its privileging of particular modes of vocal production, and prescribed meanings and values around that vocal sound.

The piece elegantly offers the voice not as a musical object with a prescribed set of meanings but rather as an 'open' voice, as an encounter in which the listener, as per Eco's original instructions for negotiating an 'open work', is invited to plot his or her own path of understanding through the labyrinth of meanings, associations and references the sounding voice creates. In Figure 1.1, we see an explicit example of this 'openness' as the voice appears, through an identically notated gesture, in the dual aspect of a rapid coloratura descending scale, and in a peal of full voiced laughter. In this elision of a virtuosic classical vocal gesture with an ordinary, everyday human utterance, we can hear an explicit reinstatement of this 'voice residue' in the context of the classical vocal work, offering a critique and commentary on the classical musical culture that customarily represses or rejects such associations and meanings. As Arbo comments

³ La mise en scène de cette surabondance, de ce 'residue vocales' expulsé par le sélection naturelle du *belcanto* (mais aussi du *Lied*, du *Musikdrama*, et même dans un certain mesure du *Sprechgesang*). Alessandro Arbo, 'Hiéroglyphes (la voix, le signe, l'akoumène)', in *Omaggio a Luciano Berio*, ed. Danielle Cohen-Levinas (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006), 20, trans. author's own.

⁴ C'est comme s'ils voulaient montrer que dans la proximité de l'écoute d'une seule voix, - qu'elle soit réelle ou instrument - se cache le polyphonie bruyante de toute une vie, un espace acoustique que la culture musicale dominante aurait en quelque mesure effacé ou refoulé. Arbo, 'Hiéroglyphes', 21, trans. author's own.

[it] tricks us: alas, it sounds like a descending scale, like other figures we come [to a recital] to hear. But also, the laughter of a woman, does it not sometimes sound precisely like such a figure? ⁵

In challenging our conventional, semiotically oriented listening to hear ‘such a figure’ not (just) as a rarified bel canto musical gesture, but to hear it as a physical, vocal outburst – that most human, involuntary response to an experience of humour or pleasure or excitement – *Sequenza III* shows the voice as ‘open’ to alternative, individual hearings and interpretations.

Sequenza III, with its strange, uncomfortable and provocative setting of the human voice, did not however arise in a vacuum, but emerged from the intersection of a number of social, musical and cultural contingencies. The late 1950s and early 1960s form a historical moment in which the human voice as a means of cultural and artistic expression underwent radical interrogation at the hands of a post-war generation of Italian avant garde artists. While works such as *Sequenza III* can show us the extent of this ‘explosion’ and reconfiguration of the sounding voice as something open to multiple hearings and understandings, we can also trace through the work’s associated scholarship an ingrained myopia, or perhaps deafness, to the human voice as plural, diffracted and multiple, in favour of ‘flattened’ largely positivist accounts of the voice as vehicle of inscribed hermeneutic meanings. If *Sequenza III* is an echo chamber that allows ‘voice’ to sound out in the richness of all of its multiple resonating partials, then musicological accounts of this piece often dampen and reduce these partials to dull sounding tone, offering a flattened account of the voice that fails to recognise its original resounding complexity.

In this chapter, I will examine the wider historical and musical context in which *Sequenza III* arose, to shed light on the emergence of a radically reconfigured concept of ‘voice’ in art music at this time. I will explore the work’s associated scholarship to offer an illuminating case study on the largely overlooked gap between the complexity and ‘openness’ of the human voice in musical performance, and the discursive ‘flattening’ of the voice that occurs in musicological accounts of it.

⁵ Sa disparition nous donne tort: hélas, il ressemble a un gamme descendente, a d'autres figures que nous venons d'écouter. Mais d'ailleurs, le rire d'une femme ne correspond-il pas quelquefois précisément à une telle figure? Ibid., 18, trans. author's own.

Berio and the voice

In just one brief extract of the short, unaccompanied *Sequenza III*, we have found what appears to be a radical departure from the formal conventions of classical singing up to this point in time – prompting a series of further questions. Was such unconventional treatment of the human voice unique to the work of Luciano Berio? Why did such an interrogation of the human voice in music occur in this place, Italy, and at this time, the 1950s and 1960s? And what does such a radical reinvention of vocalty in classical music mean for us today, as scholars of music history, and of the understanding of the human voice within that narrative?

To begin to answer these questions, I will consider the place of the human voice in Berio's wider compositional output, situating the composer's work within the prevailing musical and cultural currents at play in post-war Italy and in wider European thought at this time; and examine the profound historical self-consciousness that underpinned the works of not just Berio but of the wider generation of musicians, composers, writers and intellectuals of which he was a part, and with whom he continually collaborated.

Luciano Berio is renowned for his extensive and unconventional use of the human voice throughout his career, from the earliest electroacoustic works devised in the Studio Fonologia in Milan in the 1950s, to his iconoclastic works of music theatre in the 1960s and '70s, through to his large scale operatic works of the 1980s, '90s and beyond. His oeuvre spans accompanied song cycles, extensive orchestral and vocal works, and unaccompanied solo studies, incorporating a vast gamut of vocal behaviours from conventional lyrical and classical singing to extended vocal techniques and electronic recordings and manipulation. Certainly Berio's vocal composition throughout his career has been characterised by a vast array of techniques, settings and treatments of the voice that he employs; nevertheless, what unites these disparate styles is the concern with the human voice's unique capacities as a site of meaning, signification and communication. Early works such as *Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)* (1958) saw the electronic manipulation of Cathy Berberian's recorded voice as she read extracts from Joyce's *Ulysses* in a number of different languages, exploring the effect of the vocal sound phasing in and out of semantic

coherence depending on the listener's comprehension of the spoken texts.⁶ Described by the composer as an 'electro-acoustic elaboration of Cathy Berberian's voice on tape', the piece explores 'a new kind of unity between speech and music, developing the possibilities of a continuous metamorphosis of one into the other'.⁷ As a result of this metamorphosis, Berio wrote,

It is no longer possible to distinguish between word and sound, between sound and noise, between poetry and music; once more, we become aware of the relative nature of these distinctions and of the expressive character of their changing functions.⁸

Later works such as *Sequenza III* explicitly fragment linguistic texts into disjointed words, phonemes and syllables in order to obscure their primary signifying functions, instead mining the words for their sonic and musical potential. This technique of linguistic fragmentation is one that appears throughout Berio's vocal oeuvre, an approach that, in the words of David Osmond-Smith 'bestrode conceptual distinctions between word as sign, and as musically structurable sound.'⁹

Berio's work explored the notion of voice's inherent expressivity, and its ability to communicate meaning or intention without recourse to the mediating signifiers of words and language. The early tape work *Visage* (1961) for example, created in the Studio Fonologia in Milan in collaboration with singer Cathy Berberian, is constructed as a kaleidoscopic stream of vocal sounds and gestures, with only one distinguishable word emerging in the course of the piece.¹⁰ The vocal behaviours include whispers, sighs, laughter, sobbing, gasps, and panting, creating a dense collage of vocal sounds, highly suggestive of a variety of emotional states. In fact the piece, originally created for the national Italian radio broadcaster RAI (Radiotelevisione italiana, formerly, pre 1954, Radio Audizioni Italiane), was deemed unsuitable for airing due to what the programmers felt to

⁶ Luciano Berio, 'Thema (Omaggio a Joyce) – Author's Note', *Centro Studi Luciano Berio* [website] <<http://www.lucianoberio.org/node/1503?948448529=1>> accessed 1st July 2016.

⁷ Berio, *Centro Studi Luciano Berio*.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ David Osmond-Smith, Ben Earle, 'Berio, Luciano', *Grove Music Online* [website] <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/02815>> accessed 18th July, 2015

¹⁰ The word that appears is 'parole' – the Italian and French word for 'word'. In a highly self-referential gesture, the word draws attention to its own incongruity and presence, by distinguishing itself from the directly communicative, non-linguistic vocal expression that surrounds it.

be its explicitly sexual connotations and provocative content.¹¹ The Italian musicologist Gianfranco Vinay, in discussing the multiple planes of meaning and signification on which the human voice operates, describes much of Berio's vocal work as a process of semiotic dissection, distinguishing between the different means whereby the voice communicates with a listener.

The voice isn't simply a mine of musical and phonetic resources: it is also the most direct way to communicate feelings and passions. Berio is fascinated with the passionate implications of the voice, but just as he separates the semantic content and the sonic result to clarify the musicality of words and the equivalence between phonemes and instrumental sounds, he separates vocal gestures and semantic content [...] *Circles, Visages, Sequenza III*, were the first works based on this new poetic, dramatic and expressive osmosis, explored through the voice of Cathy Berberian.¹²

From this early burst of iconoclastic creativity, Berio's works continued to use the voice in a vast array of attitudes, delving into its musical, expressive, communicative, sonic, political, phenomenological, lyrical, personal, social and historical resonances, creating a range of musical settings in which the voice's potential incarnations and meanings could resonate. Mid-scale orchestral settings of the voice proliferated during the 1970s, reflecting a playful melding of his lyrical dramatic roots with a contemporary music theatre sensibility. *Recital I (for Cathy)* (1973), for solo mezzo soprano and seventeen instruments, played with ideas of identity and selfhood through a self-consciously Brechtian collage of a singer's vocal repertoire; while *E vó*, (1972) for soprano and fourteen instruments draws on the vocal idiom of Sicilian folk songs, placing their lyrical naïveté in tension with the knowing orchestration of a classical concert hall tradition. The 1970s saw an expansion of choral and orchestral numbers too, in works such as *Coro* (1977), in which Berio returned

¹¹ David Osmond-Smith, 'The Tenth Oscillator: The Work of Cathy Berberian 1958-1966', *Tempo*, 58/227 (2004), 8.

¹² La voix n'est pas seulement une mine de ressources phonétiques et musicales; elle est aussi le moyen le plus direct de communiquer les affects et les passions. Berio est fasciné de les implications passionnelles de la voix, mais comme il sépare le contenu sémantique et le résultat sonore afin de faire éclater la musicalité des mots et les équivalences entre phonèmes et sons instrumentaux, il sépare geste vocal et contenu sémantique... *Circles, Visage, Sequenza III*, sont les premières œuvres basées sur la nouvelle osmose poétique, dramatique et expressive, expérimentée à partir des caractéristiques de la voix de Cathy Berberian. Gianfranco Vinay, 'Berio: Le chant des sirènes et la poétique de l'œuvre "ouverte" aux résonances', in *Omaggio a Luciano Berio*, ed. Danielle Cohen-Levinas (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006), 28, trans. author's own.

to the setting of folk songs and texts, but in an arrangement that experimented with the nature of instrumental and vocal sound, and the liminalities between listener and performers in the acoustic space. In a radical reconfiguration of traditional orchestral layout, each of the forty singers is placed beside one of the forty orchestral instruments, drawing out the links and discontinuities between voice qualities and textures, and instrumental sounds as they collide and converge in the concert hall. Berio revisited too the operatic form that he had sought to ‘explode’ and re-define in the 1960s, spending the next three decades self-consciously re-appraising traditional operatic forms even as he engaged with and drew from them. This ambivalent tension led to works that eschewed linear narratives in favour of more fragmented, kaleidoscopic, indeed ‘open’ formal structures, such as *Opera* (1970), *La Vera Storia* (1981), *Un re in ascolto* (1984), *Outis* (1996) and *Cronaca del luogo* (1999). Alongside these large scale works, Berio continued to compose chamber-scale pieces for voice and often unconventional instrumental combinations or electronic manipulation, drawing out the voice’s wider sonic, dramatic and expressive resonances, in works such as *a-ronne* (1974) for five voices and tape; *Cries of London* (1975) for six solo voices; *Canticum novissimi testamenti* (1991) for eight voices and eight wind instruments; or *Altra Voce* (1999) for mezzo soprano, alto flute and electronics.¹³ This brief overview gives an impression of the scale and scope of Berio’s vocal explorations and settings across his composing career; from small scale solo pieces to large operatic and orchestral works, the voice is heard in a huge array of settings, activating and highlighting the gamut of incarnations and associations that the human voice harbours.

The choice of Berio’s works as objects of study in this thesis by no means suggests that his are the only ones among the vast catalogue of classical vocal music through which we can discover the voice’s many aspects and incarnations. Indeed, it is arguable that in listening to or performing any piece of vocal music, any structured performance of the sounding voice in a musical context, the listener or performer must negotiate a path through these perennial questions of the voice’s place and function, between words and music, communication, self-expression, and obedience to a musical or linguistic text. However, in Berio’s works, we find a deliberate and conscious staging of this negotiation and questioning, in which the voice is held up to dissection and scrutiny, inviting the listener to plot his own paths of understanding through the myriad expressive possibilities the

¹³ Osmond-Smith and Earle, *Grove Music Online*; Raymond Fearn, *Italian Opera Since 1945* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 175-86.

works expose. In a conversation with the composer Franco Donatoni recorded in 1985, Berio discussed this multiple and irresolvable nature of the sounding voice in music, and the responsibility of the listener in each 'performance' of the voice.

The instrument as a voice, the voice as an instrument: the history of music in the past has always been balanced between these two poles. For certain contemporary musicians, the dilemma is not yet resolved [...] but the voice is maybe not an instrument; it is a collection of technical and expressive possibilities that one must discover every time.¹⁴

This 'dilemma' posed by the voice in music - whether the voice is simply a source of sonic material like any other instrument, or embodies a degree of expressiveness to which instrumental music aspires - has, as Berio observed, occupied musicians, composers, critics and philosophers throughout the history of music; his approach to the voice in music was just one among a generation of post-war composers who sought to explore and radically re-appraise the traditional materials and practices of Western art music.¹⁵ Musical and compositional reactions to this question have run the gamut from the highly systematised and controlled, for instance in the work of Pierre Boulez's explorations of vocal and instrumental timbre, to extreme degrees of 'openness' and freedom, as in the aleatory works of John Cage. Boulez, one of the leading figures in the development of post-war modernist musical directions and idioms, through the activities and collaborations

¹⁴ L'instrument comme voix, la voix comme instrument; l'histoire de la musique dans le passé a toujours balancé entre ces deux pôles. Pour certains musiciens contemporains, le dilemme n'est pas encore résolu [...] Mais la voix n'est peut être pas un instrument; elle est un ensemble de possibilités techniques et expressives qu'il faut découvrir chaque fois. Luciano Berio, cit. in Nicola Scaldaferrri, 'La voix de Cathy Berberian,' in Gianmario Borio, Pierre Michel, eds., *Musiques vocales en Italie depuis 1945: esthétique, relations texte-musique, techniques de composition* (Strasbourg: Millénaire III, 2005), 191-2 trans. author's own.

¹⁵ The story of the human voice in the 'history of music' is vast and complex; even limiting it to the history of Western art music spans a huge narrative, from the spiritual disputes of successive generations of the Christian church in Europe, to the stylistic innovations of the Classically inspired Florentine Camerata in the late sixteenth century; from the seismic aesthetic revolutions within nineteenth century opera to twentieth century developments of recording and amplifying technology; such a narrative remains far beyond the scope of this thesis. For a historic exploration of the operatic voice and its reception over the last four hundred years, and how it reflects the ever-changing ways in which the human subject is understood and represented, see Gary Tomlinson, *Metaphysical song: an essay on opera* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1999); also Sandra Corse, *Operatic subjects: the evolution of self in modern opera* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 2000). For an account of the various expressive situations the voice has inhabited in western art music and aesthetic philosophy of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, see Lydia Goehr, *The quest for voice: on music, politics, and the limits of philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998); Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung voices: opera and musical narrative in the nineteenth century*, (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991)..

that grew from the *Internationale Ferienkurse für Neue Musik* in Darmstadt, approached the voice as a sounding vocal instrument, exploring its timbral range in a highly structured sonic context, with works such as *Le Marteau sans Maître* (1955). Here, he created a work of highly complex serial structures, scored for alto voice, alto flute, viola, guitar, vibraphone and xylorimba, in which the voice is composed into the piece purely as a continuation of its instrumental and sonic surroundings; any text that is sung is then reflected through the other instruments, as the non-vocal movements are formed of musical extrapolations of the sung movements. In this way Boulez created a continuous musical landscape into which the voice recedes, any unruly elements of particularity subsumed into the overarching, highly organised, musical and timbral structure. His contemporary Karlheinz Stockhausen took a more exploratory, flexible approach to the expressive range of the voice in *Gesang der Jünglinge* (1956), where he traced the disintegration of the vocal sound from recognisably human along a spectrum towards complete dissolution into undifferentiated noise, through the electronic manipulation of recordings of the voice of a young choirboy. In exploring these liminal territories between speech, voice, and sound, his work illustrates the vast array of expressive and associative potential embodied in the sound of the human voice, from the intensely evocative sound of a child singing a religious hymn, to the point of the voice's dissolution and assimilation into the realm of sheer noise. The strict control and gradation of the sound of the voice along a spectrum of intelligibility, from recognisable language to identifiably human vocal sound, to its dissolution into undifferentiated noise, undoubtedly paved the way for later vocal works by Berio, such as his 1958 product of the Studio di Fonologia *Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)*. Composed in collaboration with Umberto Eco, this electro-acoustic work researching the liminal territories between vocal sound and comprehensible language was begun in 1957, a year after the first performance of Stockhausen's celebrated work, a piece that Berio was familiar with and admired.¹⁶

Conversely to this approach of strict control and categorisation was the 'openness' of approach in the work and musical philosophy of John Cage, an approach that was brought to the attention of Berio and his contemporaries of the European musical avant-garde at the 1958 Darmstadt international summer school, at which Cage delivered three controversial and provocative lectures. Berio was in attendance that year presenting the work of the Studio di Fonologia to an international audience, and wanting to involve well-

¹⁶ Nicola Scaldaferri, *Musica nel laboratorio elettroacustico: Lo Studio di Fonologia di Milano e la ricerca musicale negli anni cinquanta* (Lucca, 1997).

known international composers in the work of the studio, invited Cage to Milan to complete some new work over the following winter. Cage accepted the invitation, and during his stay visited Berio's house most evenings for dinner, there meeting and subsequently collaborating with Cathy Berberian on what was to become the vocal piece *Aria*, a ten minute collage of vocal styles, texts, pitches and deliveries which capitalised on Berberian's prodigious abilities as a singer, a mimic, and a multilingualist.¹⁷ Cage's score, which as Arman Schwartz describes 'does little more than provide the performer with a set of squiggles, to interpret as she likes', inscribes his philosophy of 'openness' to chance sounds, in this case the vagaries of a performer's particular voice, abilities and inclinations, into the structure of this solo vocal work.¹⁸ The eclectic mix of vocal styles and musical texts employed by the performer in the creation of each performance of *Aria* presaged a similar openness to vocal sounds and performer preferences in later Berio works such as *Epifanie* (1961), *Folk Songs* (1964) and *Recital I (for Cathy)* (1972). *Aria* was performed to great acclaim at the Darmstadt school of 1959, bringing Cathy Berberian to international attention for her enormous talent and ability to negotiate experimental and avant-garde compositional approaches convincingly in a vocal music context. 1959 also saw Cage give a well-publicised concert series around Italy; the indeterminacy and experimentalism of his work contributed enormously to the cultural debates around the concept of 'opera aperta' that raged in musical and literary circles, his conceptions of artistic 'openness' seen by many as an alternative to what was perceived as the didacticism and formal closure of dodecaphonic procedures. Indeed the publication of Cage's seminal *Lecture on Nothing*, originally delivered in 1951 in New York, in the 1959 edition of the contemporary music periodical *Incontri Musicali*, alongside articles from Umberto Eco discussing the aesthetics of 'openness' in the 'work in progress', or the young music theorist and critic Heinz-Klaus Metzger's essay entitled 'John Cage, or Liberation', gives a sense of the importance of the American composer's radical compositional philosophies to the unfolding debates of the post-war Italian musical avant-garde.¹⁹

¹⁷ David Osmond-smith, 'The Tenth Oscillator: The work of Cathy Berberian 1958-1966', *Tempo*, 58/227 (2004), 5-6; Martin Iddon, *New Music at Darmstadt: Nono, Stockhausen, Cage, and Boulez* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013) 274.

¹⁸ Arman Schwartz, 'The Absent Diva: Notes toward a Life of Cathy Berberian', *The Opera Quarterly*, 30/1, (Winter 2014), 96.

¹⁹ See Harriet Boyd, 'Staging Crisis: Opera aperta and the 1959 Venice Biennale Commissions', *The Opera Quarterly* 30/1 (2014), 56-7; John Cage, 'Lecture on Nothing', in *Incontri Musicali - Quaderni internazionale di musica*, 3 (1959, agosto), 128-149; Umberto Eco, 'L'opera in movimento e la coscienza dell'epoca', in *Incontri Musicali - Quaderni internazionale di musica*, 3 (1959, agosto), 32-54; Heinz-Klaus Metzger, 'John Cage, o della liberazione', *Incontri Musicali - Quaderni internazionale di musica*, 3 (1959, agosto), 16-31.

The influence of the modernist tradition of highly abstracted musical composition and performance was felt keenly by a generation of Italian composers and musicians, and indeed works that incorporated post tonal, serialist and procedural modes of composition proliferated among Berio's contemporaries in the years following the Second World War.²⁰ As Nicola Scaldaferri observed in his essay on the confluence of cultural and stylistic factors in the music of Berio, Berberian and their contemporaries,

It is important to consider that in the same years, the tendency of those young composers (like Luigi Nono [...]), following the movement of ideas of the Darmstadt summer school, was rather of a 'philosophico-germanic' orientation.²¹

The same generation however found themselves in an inescapable dialogue with the lyrical, vocal tradition of Italianate song and opera, modes of musical composition and performance that permeated Italian culture and musical history.²² The importance of this operatic performance tradition was embedded in the historical and cultural consciousness of this young post-war generation; as Osmond-Smith writes in his survey of Berio's vocal and theatrical works,

Within Berio's output, quantitatively the human voice shared no more than equal honours with instrumental music. However, in terms both of public perception and personal history, its role was seminal. No Italian of his generation [...] could escape transaction with that country's lyric tradition.²³

The works and preoccupations of a generation of avant-garde Italian composers and performers of this time such as Berio, Luigi Nono, Cathy Berberian, Sylvano Busotti and Bruno Maderna reflect this tension between the procedural, formal aesthetics of twentieth century musical modernism, and the culture of physical and performative vocality embedded in the Italian operatic tradition. Indeed, this profound tension is deftly outlined by Delia Casadei in her exploration of the political dimensions of the *Studio di Fonologia Musicale's* work with the human voice in the 1950s and early 1960s: the trope of Italianate vocality embedded in the tradition of song, opera and the very musicality of the language was felt to be a widespread international perception of Italy and its inhabitants, at the

²⁰ Fearn, *Italian Opera Since 1945*, 36.

²¹ C'est un point important si l'on considère que dans les mêmes années la tendance des autres jeunes compositeurs (comme Luigi Nono [...]), suivant les mouvements d'idées des *Ferienkurse* de Darmstadt, était plutôt d'orientation 'philosophico-germanique'. Scaldaferri, 'La voix de Cathy Berberian', 182-183

²² Fearn, *Italian Opera Since 1945*, xiv.

²³ David Osmond-Smith and Ben Earle, 'Luciano Berio', in *Grove music online* [website], <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/02815> accessed 27th October 2015.

expense of its claims and aspirations to a progressive, industrialised twentieth century society. From images of the barefoot singing peasant, to the ‘passionate’, emotional (and thus presumably irrational) tenor or soprano, Italy’s traditions of vocality could be felt both as a valuable legacy, and a restrictive impediment. She describes a key aspect of Berio’s early electronic tape work *Ritratto di Città*, for instance, as,

its rejection of nineteenth century literary tropes of Italian vocality [...] From Rousseau’s praise of Italy as the land of an original voice that was both music and language, to Mme de Stael’s pronouncement that Italy was a country whose language was too sonically pretty really to evolve into high literature, voice had been both the natural resource of Italy and the aural marker of the country’s failure to access an enlightened modernity [...] Berio was more than familiar with Rousseau’s account of the origin of language.²⁴

Ritratto di Città was a radio documentary composed in 1954, intended as an aural portrait of Milan over the course of a day, for broadcast by the fledgling national radio station, the RAI. It consisted of a text written by the ethnomusicologist Robert Leydi, read alongside a musical commentary composed by Berio and Bruno Maderna, made up of synthetically generated sounds, recordings of street noises like traffic and bells, and a collage of recorded speech fragments. What is notable in the sounds of the voices used is their apparent banality, their adherence to speech rather than song, and to subjects of daily commerce and bureaucracy (the fragments translate as ‘Your courteous reply...’; ‘Accountant Rossi’; ‘Bank statement, receipt’, and similar statements), using the statements of bank clerks and accountants rather than any peasants, heroes or impassioned tenors to paint this modern Milan. It is worth noting that *Ritratto* was composed around the same time that Berio had submitted a proposal for an electronic music studio to the RAI, a studio that was to become the *Studio di Fonologia Musicale*, opening in 1955; as such, *Ritratto* can be read as the efforts of an ethnomusicologist and two composers to convince the national broadcaster that a radiophonic studio, researching and producing electronic music, could play a part in the development of Italy’s identity as a forward looking, modern nation state. The vocal fragments not only speak of the ordinary daily life of a busy, commercialized urban centre, but they do so in a standardised form of the Italian language, a ‘national’ language without any trace of

²⁴ Delia Casadei, ‘Milan’s Studio di Fonologia: Voice Politics in the City, 1955–8’, *Journal of the Royal Musical Association*, 141/2 (2016), 415.

regional accent or dialect – this was significant in the light of the extreme linguistic variations throughout the Italian peninsula, which as eminent Italian linguist Tullio de Mauro noted in 1962,

Dialects had political connotations: they signalled an impoverished rurality that the urbanized state-owned radio did not wish to represent.²⁵

The sound of the voice then, in Berio and Maderna's electro-acoustic sonic collage, takes on inescapably political overtones, engaging in direct conversation with the 'Italianate' voices of cultural and operatic tradition, and the linguistically diverse voices of Italy's wider rural population and 'folk' culture - a culture to which Berio would return and explore throughout his career in his use and settings of folk songs and texts.

This political dimension to the composers' aesthetic and musical research did not arise in isolation, but reflected the shared concerns of a vibrant generation of artists and musicians in post-war Italy. As Berio recalled,

Those features that musicians of my generation had in common were very deep rooted but also very general: we were interested in the same things and we rejected broadly the same things. During the first years of the 'Roaring fifties' we shared the need to change, to clarify, to get a deeper knowledge of and to develop the serialist experience. Some felt the need to reject history, others who were more responsible wanted to re-read it and not accept anything without first examining it. Each one of us made a different contribution to an important evolution in music.²⁶

The negotiation between traditions of vocalicity and the demands of a progressive musical modernism was already to be found in the work of fellow Italian composer Luigi Nono, whose friendship and close association with composer Bruno Maderna from the late 1940s in Venice made him a key figure in experimental musical circles in Italy, who were concerned to develop a new musical language evolved from the knowledge and techniques of the Second Viennese school of composers. These investigations into the formal underpinnings of European art music, from Bach to Schoenberg and Webern, were helped by Nono's friendship with Italian composer Dallapiccola, and later by the international musical influences he encountered at the Darmstadt summer school which he attended from 1950 onwards, and through which, alongside Stockhausen and Boulez, he became

²⁵ Casadei, 'Milan's Studio di Fonologia', 416.

²⁶ Luciano Berio, cit. in Rossana Dalmonte, Bálint András Varga, David Osmond-Smith, eds., *Two Interviews* (New York: Boyars 1985), 61.

one of the key figures of European avant-garde modernism. Having joined the Italian communist party in 1952, Nono's work continued to evidence his intense commitment to left wing socialist politics; while still adopting the modernist techniques of dodecaphony and serialism, Nono developed new styles of textual and vocal collage, using texts with overtly political messages to anchor seemingly self-contained musical structures with 'real-world' events and experiences.²⁷ The human voice was critical to the political aesthetic of works such as *Epitaffio per Federico García Lorca* (1951-3) for solo voice and orchestra, which set fragments of the poetry of Federico Garcia Lorca and Pablo Neruda, and his celebrated work *Il Canto Sospeso* (1955-6) based around the letters of condemned resistance prisoners. These two works saw the development of an innovative singing style, in which the fragmented texts are linked with musical structures that interweave individual vocal lines into a tapestry of highly varied layers and textures, sometimes featuring single voices and sometimes a dense, complex polyphony. The linking of these texts with the materiality of the human voice was central to the pieces' impact as testaments to the 'real life' experiences of people who had been oppressed, brutalised and murdered by various political regimes. His stage work *Intolleranza* (1960) employed similar methods of textual and vocal collage, and its premiere in Venice was greeted with outrage by audiences for its provocative presentation of what Nono believed to be the inescapable struggles of the time, of the exploitation of workers, the struggles for civil rights, women's rights, and independence from oppressive political regimes the world over. Nono maintained a close friendship with composer Bruno Maderna, and in the early 1960s began work in the *Studio di Fonologia Musicale* in Milan, of which Berio and Maderna had been directors since its opening in 1955, on a series of almost exclusively electronic works, again building on the varied sounds of the human voice as their musical and aesthetic basis. *La fabbrica illuminata* (1964) for female voice and tape, consisted of a 'live' soloist singing over the electro-acoustic tape composition of recorded factory sounds, the voices of workers at the factory, and the soloist's own voice, treated to complex series of electronic manipulations. The later works *A floresta è jovem e cheja de vida* (1966) and *Y entonces comprendió* (1969-70) confirmed the importance of the live presence and materiality of the human voice to Nono's compositional and political thought, in his careful selection of specific singers and actors for the particular qualities of their voices,

²⁷ See Enzo Restagno, ed., *Nono* (Torino: EDT/Musica, 1987); Gianmario Borio, 'Nono, Luigi, *Grove Music Online: Oxford Music Online*. [website] <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/20044?q=nono&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit> accessed 2nd July, 2017.

vocal timbres and individual gestures, and in the interactions between ‘live’ singers with their own voices recorded on tape.

Indeed, the centrality and importance of the voice as a site of research and musical innovation was key to the work of many of the post-war generation of Italian composers and intellectuals, associated loosely around the institution of the *Studio di Fonologia Musicale* in Milan, Italy’s first electronic music studio, which was founded under the auspices of Italy’s national broadcaster, the Radiotelevisione Italiana (RAI), in 1955. In a later interview, Berio reminisced

In Milan, with Bruno and indirectly Nono, a circle of musical interests was forming based around the RAI’s Studio di Fonologia Musicale [...] Musicologists such as Luigi Rognoni and Roberto Leydi, the philosopher Enzo Paci and Umberto Eco were all associated with us, as were many others, including those angry and elegant Leftists that Bruno named – with foresight and affectionate sarcasm – the ‘Vatican Hegelians.’²⁸

The studio’s ‘mission statement’, written by Berio in 1956, reveals the central place of human vocality in all its forms to the work of the studio, from considerations of language and intelligibility to ethnographic explorations of Italian folk songs. In the account of the studio’s purpose and activities, Berio described ‘research activities that are in preparation, concerning memory and the quality of sonic stimulus [...] the relationships between audition and phonation, with a special focus on the singing voice’²⁹, and that this special focus ‘is connected in part to other research goals concerning folk music, the study of which has, in recent times, undergone a radical renewal both on a conceptual and a methodological level’.³⁰ Indeed, the inclusion of the word *Fonologia* in the studio’s title demonstrated from the outset its specific research agenda of matters vocal and linguistic in the creation of innovative musical work; Umberto Eco, already a television writer at the RAI since the 1950s, later recounted that,

My copy of Saussure’s *Cours de linguistique générale* is one I have stolen from the *Studio di Fonologia Musicale* [...] This is just to give you a sense of how, at the time,

²⁸ Berio, *Two interviews*, 53.

²⁹ Luciano Berio, ‘Prospettive nella musica’, *Elettronica*, 3 (1956). Cit. in Casadei, ‘Milan’s Studio di Fonologia’, 420.

³⁰ Luciano Berio, ‘Prospettive nella musica’, *Elettronica*, 3 (1956), 108. Cit. in Casadei, ‘Milan’s Studio di Fonologia’, 423.

the focus of the studio was on linguistic and phonological matters [...], about which I knew nothing.’³¹

This focus was in marked contrast to the purely instrumental and technological focus of contemporary electronic studios emerging in Europe at this time, such as the *Studio für elektronische Musik des Westdeutschen Rundfunks*, opened in Cologne in 1952 at the West German national radio station WDR, and concerned initially with the creation of compositions of purely electronically generated sounds, or the BBC Radiophonic workshop in London, created in 1958 by classically trained musician Daphne Oram, whose remit was to create ‘new’ musical sounds that could not be created by a conventional orchestra, and novel sound effects to accompany radio and television programmes.³²

The vibrant cultural milieu of 1950s and early 1960s Milan, with the presence of the *Studio di Fonologia* and the intersection of Italian and international influences through the activities of figures like John Cage, Luigi Nono and Bruno Maderna created an atmosphere in which the tensions between an Italian vocal tradition and the development of a progressive musical language took on enormous significance, where the setting and sound of the voice could take on not just aesthetic but intensely political resonance.

These cultural dialectics, between traditions of European modernist composition and an engagement with the material of the singing voice, can be seen at play in some of Berio’s own earliest compositional works. Under the tutelage of Luigi Dallapiccola he refined his knowledge of serial procedures while incorporating these with the specificities of sung language and vocal timbre.

One other encounter was fundamentally important, not just for me but for the whole of Italian music: Luigi Dallapiccola [...] It was perhaps he, more than anyone else, who deliberately and unremittingly forged relationships with musical culture.³³

Berio’s subsequent composition *Chamber Music*, written in reaction to this ‘important encounter’, was a setting of poems by James Joyce that used serial techniques in its

³¹ Umberto Eco, ‘Luciano Berio, Umberto Eco, Roberto Leydi rievocano lo Studio di Fonologia a quarant’anni dalla fondazione’, in eds. Veniero Rizzardi and Ida De Benedictis, *Nuova musica alla radio* (Roma: RAI-ERI, 2000), 222. Cit. in Casadei, ‘Milan’s Studio di Fonologia’, 423.

³² See Thom Holmes, *Electronic and Experimental Music: Technology, Music, and Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2012); Louis Neibur, *Special Sound: The Creation and Legacy of the B.B.C. Radiophonic Workshop* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

³³ Berio, *Two Interviews*, 53.

structure, while at the same time being composed specifically for Cathy Berberian, incorporating the specifics of her vocal range and timbre, as well as her unique performative identity, into the work's material.

Old traditions, 'new vocality'

Rather than just expressing a simple concern to foreground the sounding voice in performance, the works of Berio and his musical contemporaries such as John Cage, Cathy Berberian, Bruno Maderna and Sylvano Bussotti, display a profound sense of their place in music history, which was, as they saw it, no less than to reconfigure radically the established structures of vocal music: the roles of the singer and composer, the role of the subject, of expression, and the relationship between music and text – both literary text, and the composed work as text. During the late 1950s and early 1960s, these young artists collaborated extensively, creating works such as *Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)* (1958), and *Visage* (1961) by Berio and Berberian, *Dimensioni II* (1962) by Maderna and Berberian, Cage's *Aria* (1958) and Bussotti's *Voix de Femme* (1959), where the relationships between the voice, linguistic meaning, music and expression were dissected by subjecting language, text and vocal utterance to extreme fragmentation and disintegration. In contrast perhaps with the ahistoricism of the prevailing Darmstadt aesthetic in contemporary musical practice, these musicians displayed an attitude of historical self-consciousness that permeated their musical practice as much as their 'new' compositions; certainly Berio, Berberian and Maderna programmed and performed 'early' music alongside new works whenever they had the opportunity.³⁴ Nicolas Harnoncourt commented on this

³⁴ This was not the first generation of twentieth century Italian composers to look to their musical past. The previous generation included Luigi Dallapiccola, Nino Rota and Goffredo Petrassi; they formed a group in 1950 in Rome, called 'l'Amfiparnaso' intended to revive forgotten operas, the first being *l'Amfiparnaso* from 1597 by Orazio Vecchi, alongside new works, such as Dallapiccola's *Job* (1950) and Petrassi's *Morte dell'aria* (1950). These composers were part of the 'generazione dell'ottanta', a younger generation of opera composers working just before and after World War II, who wanted to displace what they saw as Italy's 'operacentric' entrenchment with new stagings and ideas. They preceded and influenced the musical *neoavanguardia* of Maderna, Bussotti, Berberian and Berio; in a similar way as Vecchi's *l'Amfiparnaso* presaged the 'nuove musiche' of the 17th century, so too did the work of the 'generazione dell'ottanta' usher in the stylistic revolutions of the Italian *neoavanguardia*. See William R Martin, 'Orazio Vecchi', in Grove Music Online [website], <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/29102?q=orazio+vecchi&search=quick&pos=1&start=1#firsthit>> accessed 2nd October 2016; also Fearn, *Italian Opera Since 1945*, 37.

commonality of approach when he recalled his collaborations with Cathy Berberian in 1968: he was of the view that his explorations in the field of 17th and 18th century music accorded closely with the innovations of contemporary musical composition, believing that ‘creative musicians consider the two realms to be simply *avant garde*.’³⁵

In *La nuove vocalità*, an essay from 1966, Berberian discussed these vocal and compositional innovations, and articulated a theory of vocal expression defined as encompassing all of the vocal styles, sounds, ‘communicative noises’ and emissions available to the voice, depending ‘on the singer’s ability to use the voice in all its aspects of the vocal process; a process which can be integrated as flexibly as the lines and expressions on a face.’³⁶ Such a seismic shift in vocal aesthetics was considered by Berberian and her collaborators not as a simple break with the past, but rather as ‘a continuation of the old vocality, like Monteverdi’s.’³⁷ This attitude of historical continuity between ‘old’ and ‘new’ vocal music was summed up by Berberian when she wrote

In this sense *la nuove vocalità* does not refer only to contemporary music but also to the new way of approaching traditional music; exploiting the past experience of sound with a sensibility of the present (and a pre-sentiment of the future).³⁸

Berberian’s theory of ‘nuove vocalità’ or ‘new vocality’ was based on a reconfiguration of previously existing compositional structures in vocal music, that were established by the late sixteenth century stylistic revolution of the *Seconda Prattica*, or *Stile Moderno*. As Berberian saw it, the vocal innovations forged in her collaborative compositions and experimental modes of performance were linked inexorably with the stylistic revolutions of

³⁵ Les musiciens créatifs considèrent les deux domaines comme de la pure ‘avant garde’. Nicolas Harnoncourt, cit. in Monica Mertl, *Alice et Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Une Biographie: l’intelligence du cœur*, (France: Versant Sud 2002) 153, trans. author’s own. In 1968, Berberian was invited by Nicholas Harnoncourt to collaborate with him and the musicians of the Vienna Concentus Musicus on a production of Monteverdi’s opera *l’Orfeo*. The result was a recording of the opera in 1968 with Harnoncourt and the Vienna Concentus Musicus, and a number of subsequent collaborations on baroque music projects. See Marie Christine Vila, *Cathy Berberian Cant’actrice* (Paris: Fayard, 2003).

³⁶ Cathy Berberian, ‘The New Vocality in Contemporary Music’, trans. Francesca Placanica, in Pieter Verstraete, Pamela Karantonis, Francesca Placanica, eds, *Cathy Berberian: pioneer of contemporary vocality* (London: Routledge, 2014), 47; For a fuller discussion of the changing vocal styles and practices of performers around the late sixteenth century, see Tim Carter and Geoffrey Chew, ‘Claudio Monteverdi: Early Works’, *Grove Music Online* [website] http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/44352pg7?q=concerto+delle+donne&search=quick&pos=1&_start=1#firsthit accessed 4th July 2016; Bonnie Gordon, *Monteverdi’s Unruly Women: The Power of Song in Early Modern Italy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Andrew Newcomb, *The Madrigal at Ferrara, 1579–1597*, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980).

³⁷ Berberian, ‘The New Vocality,’ 58.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 49.

four centuries before; just as these musicians of the 1950s and 1960s were forced to re-evaluate the fundamental relationships between composer, performer, text and music, so too did the musicians of late 16th century Florence explore an entirely new way of approaching vocal music, breaking away from the highly systematised and abstract methods of polyphonic and contrapuntal composition to explore a style of music that saw 'affect' and emotional expression as being of paramount importance. The late Renaissance spirit of humanism, combined with an idea of Classical, pre-Christian models of artistic practice gave rise to representations and expressions of the individual and the self that would start to appear as quintessentially modern to our eyes, and ears.³⁹

Berberian's essay self-consciously positioned the work of these twentieth century avant-garde composers and performers in the context of this cultural and operatic tradition, as it sought to re-evaluate the situation of opera and vocal music in the mid-twentieth century, just as the treatises of Vincenzo Galilei and Giulio Caccini did in the sixteenth.⁴⁰ Berberian's reference to the stylistic developments of *seconda prattica* implies a view of the work of her twentieth century *neoavanguardia* contemporaries as representing a historical turning point of similar significance. Indeed, the title of her essay '*La Nuove vocalità*' can be read as a conscious echo of Caccini's treatise *La Nuove Musiche* of 1602 which codified the aesthetics and vocal style of what he termed the 'Stile Moderno'. In her own essay, Berberian observes both the importance, and the dangers, of 'tradition'.

³⁹ Links and resonances between the stylistic revolutions of the sixteenth century and the aesthetic shifts of the mid- to late twentieth centuries is beginning to be explored and drawn out in the musicology of recent years. In his work *Absolute Music and the Construction of Meaning*, (1999) Daniel Chua traces a direct arc between the utopian idealism of Galilei and Caccini's modernist musical project, and the dialectical utopianism and disenchantment of Adorno's account of musical history and modernism. The musicologist Reinhard Strohm, whose work specialises in music of the late renaissance and early Baroque, and in the history of early Italian opera, has also produced a number of papers arguing the historiographical links between the musical and philosophical revolutions of early opera, and the post-modern re-evaluations of twentieth century music and thought. See Daniel K. L. Chua, *Absolute music and the construction of meaning* (Cambridge University Press, 1999); Reinhard Strohm, 'Looking back at ourselves: the problem with the musical work-concept', in M. Talbot, ed., *The Musical Work. Reality or Invention?* (Liverpool University Press, 2000) 128-52; Reinhard Strohm, 'Collapsing the dialectic: the enlightenment tradition in music and its critics', in *Musicology and its Sister Disciplines: Past, Present and Future*, ed. D. Greer (Oxford University Press: 2000), 263-272; Julian Johnson, *Out of time: music and the making of modernity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Susan McClary, *Desire and Pleasure in Seventeenth-Century Music* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2012).

⁴⁰ Vincenzo Galilei, 'From: Dialogue on Ancient and Modern Music (1581)', in William Oliver Strunk, *Source readings in music history* ed, Leo Treitler (New York: Norton, 1998), 462-7; Giulio Caccini, 'From the: Preface to *Le nuove musiche* (1602)' in William Oliver Strunk, *Source readings in music history* ed., Leo Treitler (New York: Norton, 1998), 608-17.

Having a tradition is as important as having a mother and a father to enable birth – but the inevitable moment always arrives when we must leave the security of the old life to be able to create a new one...a tradition is always an artefact when it becomes no more than a legitimized fossil (look at the semi-deserted music halls, eloquent testimony to the mummification process), then it must make way for a ‘new’ tradition.⁴¹

This seemingly paradoxical ‘new tradition’ of vocality, in which the voice’s capabilities are fully opened and explored, and its resonances and associations thrown open to each listener’s own construction and understanding, permeates every gesture of *Sequenza III*. Its score stands not as a discrete musical work in the tradition of the canonic ‘imaginary museum’, but rather as a self-consciously incomplete template for a possible performance, inviting both the performer and the listener to bring their respective vocal presence and listening experience to bear in the construction of each instance of *Sequenza III*.

Given the centrality of the human voice to this piece, we see how not just the musical work but the voice itself is presented as an ‘open work’, reliant on listeners’ collaboration in constructing their own unique understanding and meaning from what they hear. The voice that is presented here, in a conscious departure from the traditional aesthetic positions of classical music performance, is no longer simply a vehicle for imposed authorial meanings, heard through the prescribed hermeneutic frameworks of language, musical text, vocal technique or musical tradition. Rather than a ‘closed’ musical object, here the voice is staged as an ‘open’ encounter, a site of collaborative meaning construction, between vocalist, listener and the parameters of the piece’s compositional structure, in which can resonate the numerous potential meanings, partials and complexities that the human voice offers.

***Sequenza III*, the voice, and music scholarship**

While *Sequenza III* exemplifies the experimental work by composers and performers from this period in exploring the expressive range of human vocality, it is also the case that criticism and scholarship have been slow to reflect such a seismic aesthetic shift around the voice. As we have seen, the recent ‘vocal turn’ in musicology has begun to redress this,

⁴¹ Berberian, ‘The New Vocality’, 48.

deriving new approaches to musical vocality from the innovative practices of performers, composers and listeners. It is telling for example, that while Cathy Berberian outlined her theory and continuing practice of 'New Vocality' in an essay written in 1966, it is only as recently as 2014 that the piece was published in an edited collection of essays, and brought to wider scholarly attention through its translation for Anglo-American musicology into English.⁴² Such a gap between musical practice and critical reception as regards the voice can also be seen in the field of Berio studies. The most recent and extensive series of colloquia on Berio's dramatic works was convened on six separate study days between 2010 and 2013 by the *Dramaturgie musicale contemporaine en Europe* (DMCE) study group of l'Université de Paris, in collaboration with the University of Sienna, the Fondazione Giorgio Cini in Venice and the Centro Studi Luciano Berio based in Florence, and leading to the publication of the proceedings of each of these days, in a collection of valuable and insightful discussions of Berio's theatrical innovations. The online introduction to the project states

The theatrical experience of Luciano Berio has marked the second half of the twentieth century by breaking the conventions of operatic culture and becoming a landmark in experimental musical dramaturgy.⁴³

Given the centrality of the sounding voice to 'operatic culture' and musical dramaturgy, the programme offers surprisingly few papers that could be seen as reflecting the current 'vocal turn' of musicological scholarship, or reflecting on the self-consciously reconfigured 'open voice' found in much of Berio's vocal music. Cecilia Bello Minciaccchi discussed aspects of text and 'vociferation' in the collaborative works of Berio and Italo Calvino, and Carlo Severi explored the liminal territory between vocal and instrumental sound in Western and non-Western music performance traditions, while Robert Adlington considered the reconfigured function of listening in the construction of musical and vocal meaning.⁴⁴ Other than these contributions over the course of three annual conference

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ L'expérience théâtrale de Luciano Berio a marqué toute la deuxième partie du XX^e siècle en brisant les conventions de la culture opératique et en devenant un point de repère à l'intérieur des expérimentations de la dramaturgie musicale. 'Le théâtre de Luciano Berio 2010-2013', in *Dramaturgie Musicale Contemporaine en Europe* [website] <http://www2.univ-paris8.fr/DMCE/page.php?page=9> accessed 10th March 2014.

⁴⁴ Cecilia Bello Minciaccchi, 'Vociferazione' e 'discorso ininterrotto': aspetti testuali nelle prime collaborazioni di Berio e Sanguineti (1961-1965)' in *Le théâtre musical de Luciano Berio I: De Passaggio à la Vera storia*. ed. Giordano Ferrari (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2016), 95-138; Carlo Severi, 'Differenza culturale e immagine della voce', in *Dramaturgie Musicale Contemporaine en Europe* [website] <http://www2.univ-paris8.fr/DMCE/page.php?page=9#LVS> accessed 23rd June 2013; Robert Adlington, 'The crises of sense:

events, the sounding voice and its reception did not especially feature in these discussions of Berio's reconfigured operatic dramaturgy.

While *Sequenza III* is a telling case study of a new musical approach to vocality, a survey of its associated literature equally reflects the historical tendency of musicological discourse to 'close' down questions and considerations of the voice, even in works of avant-garde vocal experimentation. In exploring this scholarship, we can also trace the impact of larger cultural debates around the performative body and voice on musicology's more recent accounts of vocality and music. Through the varied discursive accounts of the voice in *Sequenza III*, we can see the trajectory of musicological scholarship from an earlier position of taxonomical and analytical accounts of the voice towards a more recent attitude of 'openness' to the voice's innumerable, diffracted possibilities, beginning to reflect the current 'vocal turn' in discussions of music and in wider critical thought. The piece has garnered extensive discussion and scholarly examination; in the words of Janet Halfyard '*Sequenza III* has never been shifted from its position as the paradigm of the extended vocal repertoire [...and is] probably the most written-about of any piece of contemporary vocal music.'⁴⁵ Musicological discussions of the *Sequenza III* from the 1980s and '90s that exemplify a clear tendency towards analytical, taxonomical accounts of vocal writing and techniques, or a prescriptive 'interpretation' of the voice's role in the work, include the work of David Osmond-Smith, István Anhalt and Joke Dame, while Janet Halfyard's 2007 account focusses once again on the voice as a point of disputed linguistic and technical coherence in a musical setting.

Osmond-Smith, for example, a leading scholar in the field of Berio studies, whose long and fruitful relationship with the composer himself is reflected in his extensive output on Berio's music, commented extensively on this one piece, closely documenting the variety of vocal utterances and the methods of textual fragmentation employed. His account of the work in his 1991 book *Berio* details the vocal utterances, sounds and sung gestures that comprise the work, describing Berio's use of the 'articulatory polarities' of the International Phonetic Alphabet as a means of both documenting vocal sounds, and of their organisation within a structured formal system. He traces how the fragmentary phonetic sounds are derived from the source text of the work, originally a poem by German

listening to *Un re in ascolto*', in Giordano Ferrari, ed. *Le théâtre musical de Luciano Berio II: De Un re in ascolto à Un cronaca del luogo* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2016), 53-78.

⁴⁵ Janet Halfyard, 'Provoking Acts: The theatre of Berio's sequenzas', in *Berio's Sequenzas* (Harts: Ashgate, 2007), 104.

scholar, writer and politician Markus Kutter, to create a highly technically and vocally demanding series of spoken and sung sounds. These ‘oral acrobatics’ are then varied further through rapid variations in vocal timbre and production, and modes of vocal delivery. In his discussion of the structure and style of this work, and of Berio’s early works for voice culminating in the *Sequenza III*, Osmond-Smith observed,

The distinctive vocal style that Berio created in the sixties [...] owes a good deal to an all-embracing delight in the voice and its resources [...] Berio delves into texts to find in them elements, whether phonetic or semantic, that may be used as structural components in their own right.⁴⁶

Elsewhere, Osmond-Smith reiterates this emphasis on the purely textual and linguistic capacity of the voice, seeing it as a means of exploring the inherent musicality of text and language.

Throughout the sixties [Berio] had experimented with the resources of the human voice – not merely the range of articulation and tone that it could offer, but also the ways in which it could enhance the musical impact of language by emphasising, or indeed isolating its phonetic components.⁴⁷

In this account of *Sequenza III* and its structural organisation, the voice occupies the position of sonic vehicle for the linguistic and articulatory experiments of a highly structured score, heard as a means of deconstructing a linguistic text into a kaleidoscope of fragmented meanings. Osmond Smith’s account reflects on the voice in these works purely in terms of its communicative and signifying functions, as a sort of speaking instrument, capable of realising simultaneously both the linguistic and musical text provided for it by an authorial organising will.⁴⁸ There is no acknowledgment of the inherent ‘openness’ and uncertainty to be found in the vocal sound, inviting as it does the

⁴⁶ David Osmond-Smith, *Berio* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 60.

⁴⁷ David Osmond-Smith, *Playing on words: a guide to Luciano Berio’s Sinfonia* (London: Royal Musical Association, 1985), 1-2.

⁴⁸ Osmond-Smith’s fixation on language arguably at the expense of voice can be seen in his article ‘A view from the bridge’ from a similar time, which makes a detailed account of the interaction of music and text in various Berio works, while making no mention of the role of the voice in this intersection. David Osmond-Smith, ‘Between music and language: A view from the bridge’, *Contemporary Music Review*, 4/1 (1989), 89-100.

unique experiences and associations of the listener to discern or construct a ‘meaning’ from the myriad possibilities such an evocative sound presents.

A similarly taxonomical and prescriptive account of the voice is to be found in István Anhalt’s 1984 work *Alternative Voices* in which he makes a painstaking analysis of the array of unconventional vocal behaviours found in the work.⁴⁹ Anhalt lists and categorises each type of vocal utterance heard, and then places these within an interpretive framework, coming up with a prescribed meaning to ‘explain’ each one. In this case, Anhalt proposes that the ‘meaning’ of the verbal utterances is to be found through the application of developmental psycho-linguistics and a model of linguistic-psychiatric analysis, that reveals the utterances to be those of a woman experiencing an acute schizophrenic episode.⁵⁰

Berio portrays a woman who reveals, it seems, a syndrome of psychic ailments that contain elements of schizophrenia. The seemingly unwarranted series of contrasts in the piece and the fracturing of the words (and when they are uttered intact the syntax is often warped) assume an air of authenticity if we assume we are seeing a complex sample of the turbulent inner life of a person either psychotic or having a severe nightmare.⁵¹

This search for an ‘authentic’ meaning of the piece views, or hears, the voice wholly as a vehicle of prescribed signs and meanings, to be decoded and understood by an erudite listener; any other potential understandings or hearings of the voice are subsumed into the ‘text’ and narrative that such an account offers.

While the ‘story’ that the voice and its disjointed utterances tell may, in some cases, be of a more theoretical, self-referential character, a similarly closed ‘narrative’ approach is taken by other Berio scholars in their appraisal of *Sequenza III*. The 2007 collection of essays in *Provoking Acts – the theatre of Berio’s Sequenzas* is a stimulating exploration of performance issues associated with Berio’s *Sequenze* series, edited by Janet Halfyard. The

⁴⁹ István Anhalt, *Alternative voices: essays on contemporary vocal and choral composition* (Toronto; London: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

⁵⁰ Jean Piaget, *The language and thought of the child* (London; New York, 1959); Roman Jakobson, *Child language, aphasia and phonological universals*, trans. A.R. Keiler (The Hague: Mouton and Co., 1968).

⁵¹ Anhalt, *Alternative Voices*, 27.

essay on *Sequenza III*, by Halfyard herself, proposes a quasi-narrative played out in the course of the work, through a deconstruction and analysis of the comprehensible textual fragments that emerge from the array of vocal utterances. Once again, like commentators before her, Halfyard reads in the highly unconventional vocal utterances and gestures a meaningful narrative; now the piece is an enactment of a struggle between sung and spoken modes of vocal delivery, while representing the anxiety and pressure to deliver a coherent textual message within the limited parameters of the nine-minute piece.

Sequenza III presents two parallel and intertwined narratives: on the one hand, the imperative to give voice to the text before night comes; and on the other, a battle for predominance between the singing voice and the speech-based articulation.⁵²

Here again, the voice is approached in terms of the linguistic and technical gestures it conveys; a flattened taxonomy that leaves no room for uncertainty, excess, or meaning construction in the encounter between vocalist and listener in each instance of performance.

Accounts such as Joke Dame's 1998 essay reflect this musicological tendency to view the voice in terms of the musical and linguistic texts it bears, however fragmented or disrupted those hermeneutic systems of meanings might be in the context of a classical musical tradition. Indeed, it is this disruption that forms the 'narrative' of the *Sequenza III* in Dame's account, bringing a post-structuralist perspective to bear on the 'analysis' of the textual and technical content of the piece. Her essay 'Voices within the Voice' deconstructs *Sequenza III* through the analytical perspective offered by Roland Barthes' essay 'The Grain of the Voice', and traces a dialectic between the 'geno-text' and the 'pheno-text' as proposed by Julia Kristeva in her model of reading poetic texts.⁵³ Dame describes the geno-song, a term coined by Barthes, in *Sequenza III* as

The permeation of the performance by the physicality of singing, and of the compositional structure by the materiality of the musical language [...] it is not

⁵² Janet Halfyard, 'The theatre of Berio's Sequenzas', in *Berio's Sequenzas: essays on performance, composition and analysis* (Aldershot, Hants, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 107.

⁵³ Joke Dame, 'Voices within the Voice: Geno-text and Pheno-text in Berio's *Sequenza III*', in *music/ideology: resisting the aesthetic*, ed. Adam Krims (Amsterdam: G+B Arts International, 1998); Roland Barthes, 'The grain of the voice', in *Image, music, text*, ed. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 179-89; Julia Kristeva, *Revolution in poetic language* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1984).

hard to find instances where geno-song becomes operative in *Sequenza III*: For example, in the sustaining of voiced consonants, especially nasals, whereby the resonating cavities become distinctly audible; or in the emphatic articulation of voiceless consonants, and in stuttering.⁵⁴

This foregrounding of the physicality of the voice in performance forms, according to Dame, the very message or ‘pheno-text’ of the piece. In a paradoxical construction, the pheno-text, that is, the textual and musical structures of the piece through which the ‘meaning’ or ‘message’ of a work is communicated, are designed in such a way as to highlight those elements of vocal articulation that conventional classical singing seeks to erase.

Of all the voice is capable of, only a fraction of its potential is used in traditional vocal music. With *Sequenza III*, Berio opens up this restricted domain, to make room for every possible vocal sound, including physical associations and connotations which have for centuries been excluded from the art of singing. In other words, there is a deliberately shaped phenostructure, the composition, into which the geno-text penetrates by way of the chosen sound material.⁵⁵

In another essay in this musicologically curated collection, a similar view of the voice’s role as a vehicle of prescribed technical, musical and linguistic texts is presented by Jean-François Lyotard, though not himself coming from a strictly musicological position.⁵⁶ In a similar conception to Dame’s ‘reading’ of the piece, he comments on *Sequenza III* as a dialogue between music and language, a site in which the common functions of language are disrupted and deconstructed by a musical, sonorous discourse, while the gestures of musical and sung forms are interrupted by the expressive connotations of spoken words.

The musical form assumes a precise role, which is to indicate a displacement – this time a major displacement – in the respective functions of the two regions. The language undone by the cry carries a challenge to communication, to information. It throws into question the ability to exchange linguistic messages; it jams the

⁵⁴ Dame, ‘Voices within the Voice’, 239.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 240.

⁵⁶ Jean-François Lyotard, ‘A Few Words to Sing’, in *music/ideology: resisting the aesthetic*, ed. Adam Krims (G+B Arts International, 1998), 15-36.

codes and the networks that guarantee translatability and communicability [...] It is the music that speaks.⁵⁷

The excess of meaning inherent in the vocal 'cry' here serves to disrupt linguistic text, in order to allow an irruption of musical text, allowing 'the music' to speak. The potential encounter with sounding, human voice fades into the background of this struggle between music and words; according to Lyotard, it is through 'the melodic and rhythmic treatment' of a musical form that we hear 'the cry of Dionysus' as it disrupts the Apollonian forms of linguistic discourse.

The idea of the voice as primarily a vehicle of text or narrative is found too in Steven Connor's 2001 piece 'The decomposing voice of modern music'; here he strikes a note of ambivalence when he analyses the voice in *Sequenza III* not just in terms of its linguistic or textual capacities, but in terms of its 'excessiveness', of the plethora of possible understandings that can arise in the collaborative meaning construction between voice and listener.⁵⁸ Reflecting the direction of wider critical debates of post-modern aesthetics at this time towards both a more pluralistic methodology, Connor proposes a dialectical tension in all classical vocal music formed between 'closed' textual hermeneutic frameworks and this 'unruly' irreducible vocal excess, and gives *Sequenza III* as a key example of a work that exposes and mines this inherent tension in classical music. He discusses how the signifying capacity of the voice extends beyond the musical or narrative text attributed to it in conventional classical music, to encompass the vast array of meanings that accrue around the voice in everyday vocal behaviour; Berio, ever aware of this proliferation of meanings, sought both to acknowledge this labyrinth of signification, and also to contain it. According to Connor, Berio's aim in *Sequenza III* was 'both to intensify and to assimilate these connotive [sic] elements' through the 'disintegration' of the voice, by means of musical and textual fragmentation.

Paradoxically, in order to assimilate these elements, Berio had to break them down. The voice that is heard is a voice which has been fragmented, not electronically, but through acts of verbal and phonetic analysis. These analyses at once make it possible, 'confronting and exorcising the excessive connotations' to

⁵⁷ Lyotard, 'A few words to sing', 33.

⁵⁸ Steven Connor, 'The Decomposing Voice of Postmodern Music', *New Literary History*, 32/3 (2001), 467-483.

limit the voice, and allow the voice to retain its excessiveness, resisting the process of musical ‘articulation.’⁵⁹

A more pluralist approach to the voice, which traces a number of different intersecting and simultaneous incarnations of the voice, juxtaposing its physical noisy presence with its abstract hermeneutic functions can be found increasingly in some musicological accounts of *Sequenza III* in the mid-1990s; in a collection of essays by Italian and French musicologists and commentators, edited by Enzo Restagno and published in 1995, Lorenzo Arruga and Phillippe Albéra acknowledge the voice’s vast extra-linguistic signifying potential, and propose this vocal ‘excess’ as the central subject matter of *Sequenza III*. In his essay ‘Per ascoltare Berio’, Arruga highlights the aesthetic tension set up in the work between the physical specificity of the voice, with its extensive extra musical associations, and the abstract linguistic and musical texts which have their realisation in this physical sound. The phenomenal vocal presence with its intimations of a specific person and their life beyond the stage, is placed in a reciprocal, dialectical tension with the text assigned to it, each dependent on the other for its realisation in performance. According to Arruga, ‘Berio stages the relationship between the voice and the text, without each of which, the other is defunct.’⁶⁰ Albéra, in his introduction to Berio’s nine *Sequenze*, discusses *Sequenza III* as a work that specifically addresses the inherent expressive and communicative potential of the human voice beyond the parameters of mediating textual structures. Here, the musical, linguistic and technical texts are a starting point from which to explore and expose the connotative potential of the voice, directing the associative links made by a listener towards the full gamut of everyday vocal behaviours and their intimations of a person’s wider life and experiences. He summarises this view when he writes ‘you can talk, in *Sequenza III*, of a “staging” of the voice.’⁶¹

Some later musicological discussions of *Sequenza III* show a distinct ‘corporeal turn’ towards examining questions of the voice in itself, rather than simply as a textual vehicle, as well as reflecting a more plural and non-prescriptive methodological approach to these vocal works. In the edited collection of essays entitled *Omaggio a Luciano Berio* published

⁵⁹ Connor, ‘The Decomposing Voice of Postmodern Music’ 478; Luciano Berio, cit. in Rossana Dalmonte; Bálint András Varga; David Osmond-Smith eds. *Two Interviews*, (New York: Boyars 1985), 94.

⁶⁰ Berio mette in scena il rapporto fra la voce e il testo, senza che l'uno si esaurisca nell'altro. Arruga, ‘Per ascoltare Berio’, 41, trans. author’s own.

⁶¹ Si può parlare, a proposito de *Sequenza III*, di una ‘messa in scena’ della voce. Philippe Albéra, ‘Introduzione alle nove sequenze’ in Berio, ed. Enzo Restagno, (Torino: EDT, 1995), 158.

in 2006, Georges Molinié and Gianfranco Vinay both discuss the ‘corporeality’ of the voice as a starting point for the aesthetic experimentations of *Sequenza III*.⁶² Molinié proposes that the aesthetic tension formed between the evocative particularity of the human voice, and the semantic abstractions of the language it conveys, serves to highlight the uncertainties and ambiguities of both. The problems of ‘lack’ and of ‘excess’ in semantic language, the ‘slipperiness’ of meanings, and the liminality of communication and understanding in the space between vocalist and listener are, according to Molinié, demonstrated in a tangible form in the voice’s unruly and ambiguous particularity in *Sequenza III*, in a process of ‘semiotic metamorphosis’. Such a staging of the voice critiques what he sees as a privileging of linguistic formation of experience and knowledge, what he calls the ‘linguistisation’ of both classical vocal music, and wider cultural thought.⁶³

It has not been sufficiently noted, in my opinion, that [voice] is indeed in itself a semiotic metamorphosis, the scope of language and of the voice and of the textual taking the phenomenological form of problematic ‘linguistisation’, uncertain, opaque, fleeting, unstable.⁶⁴

A conceptual shift from the voice as a sonic vehicle of semantic meanings to a more plural, collaborative encounter is evident in Gianfranco Vinay’s essay in the same volume, ‘Berio: Le chant des sirènes et la poïétique de l’oeuvre “ouverte” aux résonances’, in which he takes up the theme of the voice’s ‘corporeality’ as cultural critique, while also linking Berio’s adherence to the aesthetic principles of ‘the open work’ with his use of the voice in *Sequenza III*. Vinay draws a direct connection between the poetics of ‘open’ listening, in which the listener plots her own path of understanding through a musical landscape of proliferating sonic possibilities, and the array of possible understandings of the voice such an approach opens up.

⁶² Georges Molinié, ‘Encore la voix’, in Danielle Cohen-Levinas, ed., *Omaggio a Luciano Berio* (L’Harmattan: Paris 2006), 205–211.

⁶³ ‘Linguistisation’ – the term is used by Jean- François Lyotard in his discussions of language and its relation to ‘forms of life’ or modes of being, for example: ‘En d’autres termes, Lyotard entreprend là expressément ‘une phraséologisation’ du langage ou une ‘linguistisation’ phrastique de l’étant.’ ‘In other words, there Lyotard undertakes expressly a “phraséologisation” of language or a “linguistisation” of being.’ Hans Jorgen Schanz, ‘Un nomade aux sources philosophiques’, in Niels Brügger, Finn Frandsen, Dominique Pirotte, eds., *Lyotard, les déplacements philosophiques* (Bruxelles: De Boeck Université, 1993) 99–124, trans. Emile Danino.

⁶⁴ On n’a pas assez remarqué, à mon avis, qu’il s’agit bien là, en soi, d’une métamorphose semiotique, la portée langagière et de la voix et du textuel prenant la forme phénoménologique d’un linguistisation problématique, incertaine, opaque, fuyante, instable. Molinié, ‘Encore la voix’, 207, trans. author’s own.

The role of resonance, physical and metaphorical, in his work shows up his fidelity to the poetics of 'the open work'. Throughout his work, we can see many ways he's done this, on numerous different levels of metaphorical implication. There is a purely sonic, musical level that manifests in Berio's predilection for musical forms and genres in resonance [...] But he also reintroduces the voice.⁶⁵

Vinay echoes Molinié's discussion of the 'corporeality' of the voice in *Sequenza III*, which according to Vinay opens up a new path of understanding and insight into the human presence a sounding voice indicates, shifting awareness away from a 'self' constructed in language and social indicators, towards a 'self' grounded in lived, everyday human experience.

These works sanctify the corporeality of the voice [...] The separation between vocal gesture and semantic content 'sacrifices' the socio-historic character of human language (man as political being [...]), laying bare the anthropological nature of the human voice (man as living being).⁶⁶

These accounts from 2006 of the voice in Berio's work, and specifically in *Sequenza III*, placed alongside, for example, Janet Halfyard's analysis of the voice from the following year, highlight both the gradual influence of wider critical debates on musicological discourse in the instance of the French essays, and at the same time the cultural persistence of taxonomical, textually based modes of analysis, seen in Halfyard's account. While just one small snapshot of the literature from a 'case study' of one piece of vocal music, these accounts give a sense of the critical ambivalence at play within music scholarship in relation to questions of the human sounding voice and its place in musical discourse, reflecting both musicology's historically reductive approach to the voice, and also its inexorable shift towards a more plural, multi-threaded account of it.

⁶⁵ Si l'on considère donc la résonance (dans le sens propre et métaphorique du terme) comme le prolongement et l'amplification dans la proximité et la continuité sonore, on peut comprendre comment la fidélité à ce principe a marqué durablement la poétique bérienne de 'l'ouvre ouvert'. Tout au long de l'itinéraire artistique de Berio, on peut reconnaître plusieurs façons d'utiliser ce principe selon plusieurs niveaux d'implications métaphoriques. Il y a un niveau purement sonore et musical qui se manifeste dans la prédilection de Berio pour les forms et les genres musicaux en résonance [...et] réintroduisant la conduite des voix dans des contextes harmoniques. Vinay, 'Berio: Le chant des sirènes et la poétique de l'oeuvre "ouverte" aux résonances', 26-7, trans. author's own.

⁶⁶ Ces oeuvres sacralisent la corporealité de la voix [...] la séparation entre geste vocal et contenu sémantique 'sacrifie' le caractère socio-historique du langage humain (homme en tant qu'être politique [...]) mettant à nu la nature anthropologique de la voix humaine (homme en tant qu'être vivant). Ibid., 28, trans. author's own.

In keeping with this critical and disciplinary momentum, in the following chapters I will examine in detail *how* the voice is shown as something multivalent and ‘open’ to listener encounter and individual meaning construction, in three vocal works by Luciano Berio; I will ask if we, as music scholars, can draw closer to an understanding of what voice *is*, through an engagement with questions of what the voice *does* in these three musical vocal works; and in response to these presentations of voice’s ambivalent and multiple nature, I will draw on a number of critical perspectives to shed light on the scope, breadth and variety of the ‘voices’ that can be heard resonating in the performative spaces opened up by these self-critical, provocative musical works.

Chapter 2

‘They said: Speak! But first, Sing!’: Power, politics, and the open voice in *Passaggio* (1963)

Passaggio, a half hour piece of music theatre, scored for two choirs, soprano and small orchestra, was greeted with outrage on its first performance in the Piccola Scala in 1963.

I knew the audience would lose their heads so I briefed the choir accordingly. I told the choir that they should join in as soon as the audience starts shouting, echo the last word and improvise on it. And that’s exactly what happened. Some people shouted ‘Buffoni’. The choir echoed the word immediately, sped it up, whispered it, lengthened the ‘o’ and turned the improvisation into part of the performance. The audience became completely hysterical.¹

Berio’s first foray into opera is a through-composed musical dramatic work, constructed and composed self-consciously as an *opera aperta*, an ‘open work’, which unlike the conventional linear constructions of theatrical plays or traditional opera, demanded of the audience that each listener select and follow her own path of understanding and identification through a kaleidoscopic landscape of disjointed musical, dramatic and narrative fragments. While the work was constructed to try to create a more direct

¹ Luciano Berio, ‘Luciano Berio, *Passaggio*’, *Universal Edition* [website], <<http://www.universaledition.com/Passaggio-Luciano-Berio/composers-and-works/composer/54/work/4088>> accessed 20th May, 2015.

relationship between the stage and the audience, its creators were clear that this was not simply a means of creating a provocative and uncomfortable soundscape for its avant-garde musical listeners, but to create an 'open work' in which the audience is presented with a political, even moral, choice, and in which the 'chance' elements of the audience's own reactions and vocalisations are folded into the work's structure and unique realisation.² Edoardo Sanguineti, the work's librettist, later described *Passaggio* as an 'open work' when recalling the reaction of the audience to the tauntings of the chorus members placed in their midst during the opening performance.

This effect of the chorus was such that even the audience, when it intervened to protest, came to collaborate objectively [...] It was trapped in the performance because, if it protested, if it screamed, it became a voice in the chorus; in the idea, as was said at the time, of [an] open work that could contain even fortuitous and chance elements.³

In an introductory essay written for the programme at the work's première, Umberto Eco explained the presence of the Chorus B in the audience, hurling insults and shouted comments at the lone woman onstage, as expressing the standpoint of a complacent, cruel and exclusionary society, a social order found repeated in the country's highest institutions, from the streets, to the churches to the opera houses and theatres:

We are being asked to play an active part: understanding that the reactions, the insults and the appeals of Chorus B express a clearly defined human standpoint in

² For a detailed overview of the interactions of musicians and composers with the writers and literary intellectuals of the neo-avant garde in the late 1950s, see Paolo Somigli, 'Gruppo 63 and Music: A Complex Relationship' in Paolo Chirumbolo, Mario Moroni, and Luca Somigli, eds., *Neoavanguardia: Italian Experimental Literature and Arts in the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 254–82. The development of musical 'open works' that precede *Passaggio*, alongside the genesis of Eco's theories of 'openness' in art, literature and music, is discussed in detail by Harriet Boyd in 'Staging Crisis: Opera aperta and the 1959 Venice Biennale Commissions', *The Opera Quarterly* 30/1 (2014), 49at. As well as giving an account of the ideological and aesthetic debates that raged around the theory of the 'open work' in late 1950s *neoavanguardia* circles, Boyd takes issue with Somigli's suggestion that *Passaggio* marked the first 'musical open work' in 1962, instead offering three works of music theatre commissioned for and staged at the 1959 Venice Festival internazionale di musica contemporanea, as 'suggesting examples of [musical] *opera aperte*'; these works were Alberto Bruni Tedeschi's *Diagramma circolare*, Gino Negri's *Il circo Max*, and Luciano Berio's *Allez-hop!*

³ Questo effetto del coro faceva sì che anche il pubblico, quando interveniva per protestare...veniva a collaborare oggettivamente. Era come intrappolato nella rappresentazione perché se protestava, se gridava diventava una delle voci del coro. In un'idea, come si sarebbe detto allora volentieri, di opera aperta che poteva contenere anche elementi assolutamente fortuiti e casuali. Edoardo Sanguineti, cit. in Giuliano Gallett, ed., *Sanguineti/Novecento: conversazione sulla cultura del ventesimo secolo*, (Genoa: Il Melangolo, 2005), cited in Somigli, *Neoavanguardia: Italian Experimental Literature and Arts in the 1960s*, trans. Sarah Rolfe, 264-5.

which all of us must in some way be able to see ourselves. It is a standpoint made up of conformism, defense of taboos, egoism, mental laziness, dogmatic adherence to fixed principles. It is the standpoint that characterizes audiences calmly inhabiting traditional opera houses, arranged in its classes and ready to accept the fixed order of relations between man and man that the very structure of the theatre suggests.⁴

This avowedly political work presents the audience with a series of choices: whether to recognise and identify with the values of Chorus B, their fear and anger in the face of perceived dissidence and threat, or to align themselves with the solitary woman onstage and her experiences of persecution and rejection. The work does not have a recognisable linear plot as such, but rather presents a series of human situations through which the woman progresses; these seem to suggest the outline of an arrest, an interrogation, her persecution and oppression by the inhumanity of others in power, and her final release and isolation.⁵ Rather than a recognisable narrative, the piece instead weaves textual fragments together in a kaleidoscope of tantalising associations, drawing variously on liturgical texts and religious imagery; dreamlike monologue that could be memory or fantasy; popular songs; the language of advertising and marketing in what seems to be an auction of the woman as a commodity, ‘a thing amongst things, merchandise among merchandise’; extracts from the letters of women imprisoned and persecuted for their political beliefs; as well as shouts, taunts, orders and insults, sometimes shouted, or sung, in numerous different languages, sometimes fragmented into sheer vocal noise, sometimes aggressively loud and clear.⁶ There is a recapitulation of these themes in the protagonist’s final monologue, as she reveals the overarching idea of the piece: that this series of events and scenarios reflects our own passage, our path through life. It is the depiction of the tragedies and decisions that face each one of us in our human situation.

This is our passing:

⁴ Umberto Eco, ‘Work Introduction’, *Universal Edition* [website], <http://www.universaledition.com/Passaggio-Luciano-Berio/composers-and-works/composer/54/work/4088> accessed 20th May, 2015.

⁵ Angela Carone, ‘4 donne, 7 tappe, molte voci (fuori dal coro): il libretto di Passaggio di Luciano Berio ed Edoardo Sanguineti’, *Treccani Scuola* [Website] <http://www.treccani.it/scuola/dossier/2010/Librettistica/8_carone_passaggio.html> accessed 9th September 2013; see also Raymond Fearn, *Italian Opera Since 1945* (Amsterdam: Overseas Publishers Association, 2007), 90-99.

⁶ Eco, ‘Work Introduction’, accessed 20th May, 2015.

The days pass, the rocks pass, fire, the worm: all passes...

And this, this is our passing.⁷

Umberto Eco explicitly presented the work as a series of difficult choices for the audience members, designed to provoke reaction during the performance, and thoughtfulness after it.

The choice is between the various concrete meanings that can be given to the various situations in which we see the protagonist. The choice is between chorus B and the woman, between two models of humanity. And the choice is not only aesthetic but also moral [...] this work [is] a drama in which the sacrifice of the victim neither purifies nor pacifies anyone: it must provoke a reaction, a protest, a decision. If the members of the audience want to be purified, the characters will not give them an easy option. It will be a matter for each one of us, once we have understood, once we have left the theatre.⁸

The work rests on the nature of the relationship between the audience and the stage, presenting the choice to the listener as to what message he hears and identifies with, what meanings he perceives and the values and responses that these elicit in each individual. But more than just offering the audience a range of narrative options, *Passaggio*'s creators wanted to redraw the very nature of the relationship between the work's audience, its 'receivers', and the onstage performance, by highlighting the physical presence, the viscosity of the exchanges between the 'crowd' and the vulnerable woman onstage. Here the vocal exchanges between the woman and her tormentors take on a physical immediacy that does not simply represent, but embodies and enacts the imbalances of power between the oppressed individual and the crowd. Here, the human voice is central to this reconfigured relationship. As the unfortunate woman onstage protests against her ill-treatment in song, speech, screams, shouts, whispers and outright silence, the voices of the two choruses fill the auditorium with their sound, cajoling, mocking or obliterating the sounds of her pitiful resistance, creating a continuous dialogue between stalls and

⁷ Questo è il nostro passaggio:/ passano I giorni, la pietra passa, il fuoco, il verme: tutto passa.../e questo, questo è il nostro passaggio. Edoardo Sanguineti, *Passaggio (Messa in Scena)* (London: Universal Edition, 1963).

⁸ Eco, 'Work Introduction', accessed 20th May 2015.

stage, implicating the voices of the audience members with those of her tormentors, or their silence with their willing acquiescence.

Passaggio's subtitle – that is, the Italian phrase ‘messa in scena’ – stands as a play on words, suggesting both the Catholic liturgical imagery of putting a ‘mass on stage’, and also the French phrase ‘mise en scène’, meaning variously the stage setting for a theatrical drama, or to put something into play or to set something in motion, allowing it then to unfold unhindered by any external direction. The choice of words underlines the fundamental form of *Passaggio* as an ‘Opera Aperta’, an ‘open work’, deliberately and consciously presented as such by its creators; as Paolo Somigli comments on the circumstances of *Passaggio*'s inception,

we can assert with a certain measure of plausibility that in 1962, the same year that the young scholar published his volume on the open work, an open work that was musical in nature was born at the heart of the neo-avant-garde [...] Compared to the compositions noted by Eco in *Opera Aperta*, *Passaggio* presents a more obvious connotation of engagement.⁹

The creators of *Passaggio* then, rather than directing an audience towards one specific message or outcome, preferred to stage or ‘put into play’ the conditions for each listener to engage with and draw their own meaning from the musical and dramatic action. Central to the process of creating the circumstances for this engagement on the part of the audience, was the sound of the resonating voice, in the voices of the various choruses distributed between the orchestra pit and the auditorium, the voice of the central character ‘Lei’, and the voices of the audience members themselves, as their protests and utterances were heard and repeated by the surrounding singers in the stalls. Rather than presenting the sound of the voice to the audience in the conventional form of an operatic, technically and musically polished vocal performance, in *Passaggio*, the voice is presented as open to the engagement and interpretation of the audience members, literally ‘staged’ to resonate and be constructed in the space between the singer’s physical vocalisations, and the listener’s individual hearing of it.

But what type of ‘openness’ of the voice does *Passaggio* present? After all, even an ‘open work’, according to Eco, has certain formal parameters that guide the listener’s ultimate

⁹ Luca Somigli, ‘Gruppo ‘63 and music: A complex relationship’, in eds. Paolo Chirombolo, Mario Moroni and Luca Somigli, *Neoavanguardia: Italian Experimental Literature and Art in the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 265-6.

experience of it, what he calls the inherent 'structural vitality' that makes the difference between an undifferentiated mass of sensory material, and a discrete 'work', even as it allows for a number of possible outcomes.

Now, a dictionary clearly presents us with thousands upon thousands of words which we could freely use to compose poetry, essays on physics. anonymous letters, or grocery lists. In this sense the dictionary is clearly open to the reconstitution of its raw material in any way that the manipulator wishes. But this does not make it a 'work.' The 'openness' and dynamism of an artistic work consist in factors which make it susceptible to a whole range of integrations. They provide it with organic complements which they graft into the structural vitality which the work already possesses, even if it is incomplete. This structural vitality is still seen as a positive property of the work, even though it admits of all kinds of different conclusions and solutions for it.¹⁰

Passaggio 'puts on stage' the 'openness' of the voice, in that the resonating vocal sounds heard throughout the piece are 'susceptible to a whole range of integrations', though guided by a 'structural vitality', or sense of formal intention shaped by the piece's themes and compositional strategies. In the case of *Passaggio*, the voice's 'openness' is heard as an explosion outwards of its myriad communicative, emotional and expressive capabilities in every facet of our lives, radiating beyond the small kernel of technical operatic accomplishment that is customarily heard in opera, to touch on the tiny details of the lived vocal experience of each individual. In effect then, *Passaggio* presents the open voice as an index of the profound humanity of each vocalising and listening individual, echoing in its explosion of the voice's passionate, expressive and prosaic capacities what Cathy Berberian described in her essay on the 'new vocality' in contemporary music:

It is the voice which has [...] aspects of sound itself, marginal perhaps compared to the music, but fundamental to human beings. Unlike the instrument, which can be locked up and put away after use, the voice is something more than an instrument, precisely because it is inseparable from its interpreter. It lends itself to the numerous tasks of our daily lives continuously: it argues with the butcher over

¹⁰ Eco, *The Open Work*, 19-20.

the roast beef, whispers sweet words in intimacy, shouts insults to the referee, asks for directions to the Piazza Carità, etc.¹¹

This emphasis on the lived experience of each vocalising or listening individual, through the explosion of the voice's capabilities to encompass the extra-theatrical and the mundane, resonates strongly through the work's explicitly political and ethical challenge to its audience. *Passaggio*'s use of operatically unconventional vocal behaviours, from whispers to shouts, song, speech and even silence point constantly back to the individual human body and life from which its sound emerges. Just as the piece itself, as an 'open work', offers the audience an array of narrative, musical and moral options from which to choose a path with which to identify, so, too, is the human voice presented in an array of potential attitudes; from the operatic singing of a work of theatrical musical performance, the shouts and screams of a human in fear or under attack, the massed voices of an angry crowd, the silence of an individual's resistance, or surrender. The sounds of the human voice in *Passaggio* deliberately invoke all of these human situations and more, offering a gamut of vocal attitudes and associations with which the listener can choose to identify or ignore. The provocation of the audience members themselves to shouts and cries which, as Berio described, became 'part of the performance' implicates the audience member, the listener or 'receiver', in the construction and creation of the work, their 'chance' reactions becoming folded into the very fabric of the 'open work' of *Passaggio*.

In a similar way to the open work, the audience members' own individual reactions and understandings of the voices they hear present an array of narrative, musical, and ethical choices; whether one hears an operatic song, a scream of terror, a shout of protest or of anger or aggression, each individual choice or possibility contained within the sound of the 'open voice' is enfolded into a construction of the sounding voice as each listener encounters it. Just as *Passaggio*'s form as an 'open work' was intended not simply as a provocative unconventional musical form but rather underlines the moral and political aspects of social and theatrical participation, so too does the presentation of the human voice in its evocation of extra-musical 'real-life' experiences point towards the active

¹¹ Cathy Berberian, 'The New Vocality in Contemporary Music (1966)', translated by Francesca Placanica, in Pamela Karantonis, Francesca Placanica, Pieter Verstraete, eds., *Cathy Berberian: pioneer of contemporary vocality* (London: Routledge, 2016), 47.

choices that the listener must make, and her own construction of the voice they hear in the listening encounter. In showing the voice as 'open' in this way, the work's central message is bound up not just with *what* is said, or even *how* it is said, but with what the listener *chooses* to hear.

In offering the voice as open to the listener's perception and interpretation of it, there is created a site of collaborative meaning construction, restoring to the listener a degree of agency in the transaction between stage and auditorium not usually found in traditional theatre and opera practice. Rather than hearing what they are intended to hear by the composers, creators and performers, here listeners are invited to choose what and how they hear the voice: maybe as a travesty of beautiful operatic technique, or as the impassioned cries of pain of a tormented individual, or perhaps as the vocal delivery of complex interwoven texts, referring to a host of authors and sources. In this way, the work's presentation of the 'open voice' is as much political as it is musical or aesthetic, in its redrawing of 'the fixed order of relations between man and man' that Umberto Eco describes and condemns in his introductory essay to *Passaggio*.¹²

So what *do* listeners hear in *Passaggio*? The voices that are heard come from the individual woman onstage, denoted simply as 'Lei' (She) and from the two choruses, Chorus B in the audience and Chorus A in the orchestra pit acting as a sort of Greek chorus, commenting on the action, exhorting the protagonist to surrender, or to resist. The piece is structured around six *Stazione* or 'stations', appearing as separate musical sections in the score, and indicated by six separate positions onstage. The nameless protagonist proceeds between these positions according to a set path laid down in the score.

¹² Eco, 'Work Introduction', accessed 20th May 2015.

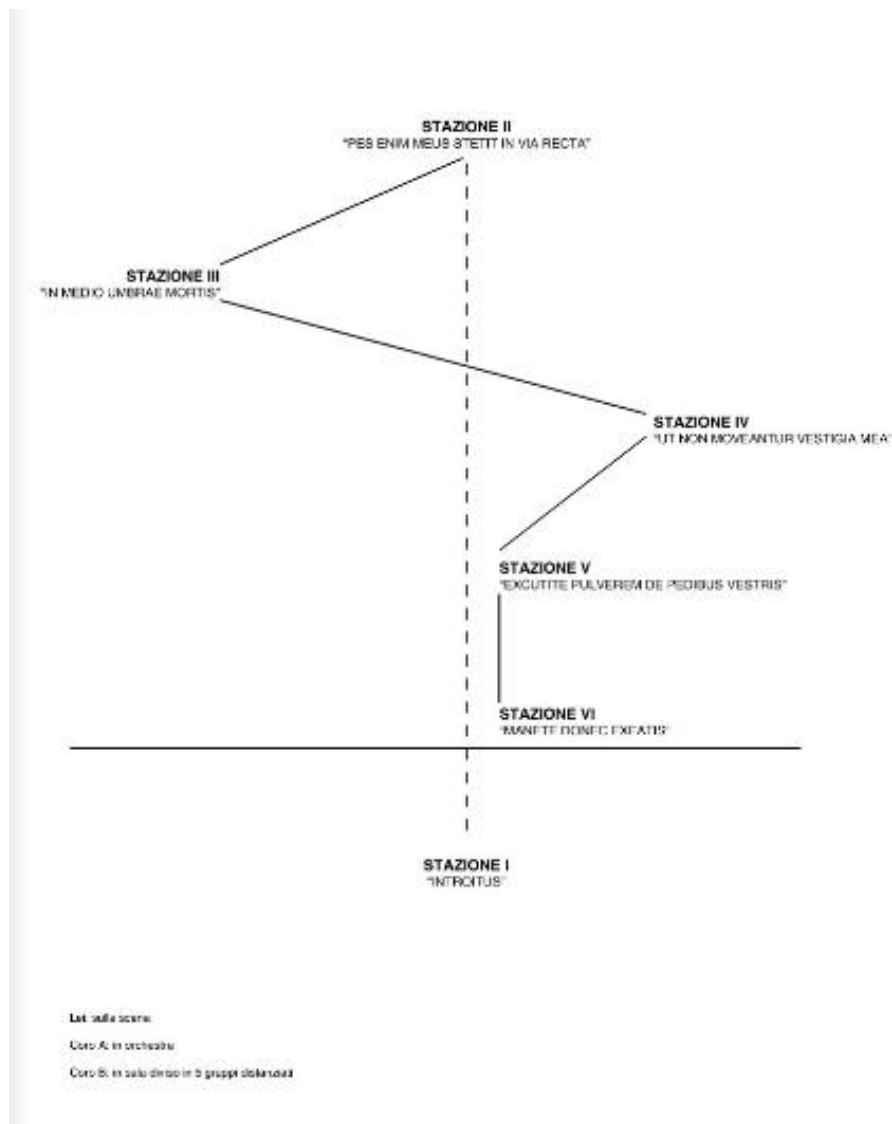


Fig. 2.1 Diagram of stage layout and direction of movement, in *Passaggio (Messa in Scena)*, (London: Universal Edition, 1963)

The action begins with darkness onstage, and the sound of Chorus B arising from the auditorium, to be joined by the whispers and interjections of Chorus A from the Orchestra pit. Only at the very end of the first section does a light pick out the solitary woman onstage; from there she makes her way from station to station, seemingly enacting a series of tortuous situations; her arrest, her interrogation and abuse in Station III, performing a striptease and being auctioned off to a baying crowd in Station IV, her release in Station V and her final monologue and angry recapitulation of her experiences in Station VI. These 'events' form only the loosest framework for Edoardo Sanguineti's experimental narrative;

the libretto is composed of a collage of a great many diverse quotations and literary fragments; from the letters of Milena Jesenská and Rosa Luxembourg, *De Rerum Natura* by the Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius, graffiti seen by Berio on a university campus in America, to popular songs of the day and verses from the old and new Testaments, as well as fragments of seemingly random words and phrases in a number of different languages, often devoid of sense or regular syntax.¹³ The vocal textures vary from a solo voice to a dodecaphonic wall of choral sound; the means of delivery run the gamut of singing, speech, whispers, silence, coughs, sobs, cries and shouts. All of these are delivered not just from the stage, but throughout the auditorium, creating at times an unruly, overwhelming kaleidoscope of vocal sound, a gesture described by Berio in a 1985 interview as a sort of ‘vocal magma’.

It happens when the two ‘enemy’ choruses, one in the orchestra and one distributed among the audience, meet momentarily on the same word (‘libera’) from which they take off in full cry, and in different directions: the chorus in the audience [Coro B] singing musical fetishes (which can be substituted at will), while the other one [Coro A] sings songs with political connotations, linked to the struggle for liberation. The result is a vocal magma that is only just differentiated by the vocal behaviour of the two groups, and their different placing in the theatre, but a magma that is immediately redeemed by the instruments, and the ‘victorious’ singing of the chorus in the orchestra. It is one of the many passages from distinct to indistinct [...] of which the score of *Passaggio* essentially consists.¹⁴

The description of the ‘passage’ from distinct to indistinct sound is characteristic of one of the many parameters on which the piece’s musical construction is built. Recalling the moral and aesthetic choices presented to the audience that Eco outlined, the choice

¹³ A great many of the allusions and references that underpin the musical texture and libretto of *Passaggio* have been individually traced in various commentators’ and musicologists’ accounts of the work, including Ivanka Stoianova, ‘Passaggio’, in *Luciano Berio: chemins en musique* (Paris: Editions Richard-Masse, 1985), 234-59; Ute Brüdermann, ‘Passaggio – “Introibo ad altare putridae Scalae”’, in *Das Musiktheater von Luciano Berio* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2007), 56-73; Carone, ‘Il libretto di Passaggio di Luciano Berio ed Edoardo Sanguineti’, accessed 9th September 2013; Claudia di Luzio, ‘Sanguineti e Berio: suono, voce, gesto’, *Poetiche: Rivista di letteratura*, 8/3 (2006) 529-548; Giordano Ferrari, *Les débuts du théâtre musical d'avant-garde en Italie: Berio, Evangelisti, Maderna* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2000), 45-110; Emilio Sala, ‘Passaggio: contesto, drammaturgia, messinscena (con un inedito di Virginio Puecher)’, in *Le théâtre musical de Luciano Berio I: De Passaggio à la Vera storia. Actes de six journées d'études qui ont eu lieu à Paris et à Venise entre 2010 et 2013*, ed. Giordano Ferrari (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2016), 65-94.

¹⁴ Rossana Dalmonte and Bálint András Varga, *Luciano Berio / two interviews*, translated and edited by David Osmond-Smith (New York; London: Boyars, 1985), 69.

between concrete meanings, between modes of identification, between, in Eco's words, differing 'models of humanity', Berio intended these dialectics to be played out and repeated throughout the musical structure of the work, reflected in a series of 'passages' or transitions between harmonic contrasts, vocal behaviours and densities, or between instrumental textures. In describing the idea of transition that pervades each structural level of the music, Berio wrote:

The soprano (Lei)... Chorus A (in the orchestra pit) and Chorus B (among the audience) develop independently of each other a series of harmonic relationships and relationships between registers [...] either as a series of chords, a harmonic background, or a polyphonic arrangement), which constitutes one of the principal structural elements of the connecting passages - sometimes gradual and sometimes sudden - between one station and the next. More Precisely:

- maximum to minimum textual density and complexity
- from maximum to minimum on the scale of instrumental possibilities (as quiet or as loud as possible, as high or as low as possible, as short or as long as possible, etc.)
- from tutti to solo
- from 'noise' to 'sound'
- from speaking to singing (and all the intermediate vocal emissions)

[...] The musical relationship between the officiants (She, Chorus A and Chorus B) is reflected in dramatic and symbolic situations which are sometimes unanimous and sometimes contrasting.¹⁵

Throughout *Passaggio*, the sound of the human voice takes a central role, as it transitions from song to speech in the soloist's line, as it circulates and fills the auditorium in waves of volume and clashing textures, and as it delivers an array of disjointed texts, jumbled statements and fragmented words from a variety of languages. The listener is thrust into what journalist Massimo Mila, in his review of the opening performance, described as the middle of a 'whirlwind' of voices in which they must search for a meaning. The voice is

¹⁵ Berio, 'Luciano Berio, *Passaggio*', accessed 20th May 2015. A detailed analysis of the harmonic and instrumental parameters in *Passaggio* can be found in Ingrid Pustijanac, 'Osservazioni analitiche su alcune questioni formali e di tecnica compositiva in *Passaggio* di Luciano Berio' in Giordano Ferrari, ed., *Le théâtre musical de Luciano Berio I: De Passaggio à la Vera storia* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2016), 139-176; an extensive analysis of Berio's categories of transition, including transformations of harmony, timbre, rhythm, vocal and instrumental onsets, and transition between song and speech can be found in Ferrari, *Les débuts du théâtre musical d'avant-garde en Italie*, 65-104.

thus presented from the outset as an 'open' encounter, offering multiple meanings and connotations to the listener, its physical performative presence creating a 'direct, immediate excitement' between the performers and audience.¹⁶

This bodily, unmediated connection of the performative voice with the ears and bodies of the listeners was key to the work's intention of political and aesthetic provocation, recalling Norie Neumark's extensive discussion in 2010 of the human voice in the context of the arts, and specifically the performing arts. Coming from the disciplinary perspective of Performance Studies, Neumark explores the links between bodily and vocal presence in live theatre or opera, and its potential for radical political commentary, commenting that

Performativity suggests something that doesn't just describe or represent, but performs or activates - acting as 'a material force to change something' [...] Performativity might also be understood as typical of what Jacques Rancière analyses as the aesthetic regime of art: that is, performative works enact and make evident, rather than represent or express.¹⁷

Neumark here refers to Rancière's work *The Politics of Aesthetics* (2004), which analyses the complex intersections of the arts and performativity with social and political commentary and action.¹⁸ Key to this intersection for Rancière is the mode of engagement with those tangible things that are common to both aesthetic practice and the practice of politics or 'the projects of domination or emancipation', such as the body, bodily movement, the spaces these bodies inhabit, and the voices that fill them.

The arts only ever lend to projects of domination or emancipation what they are able to lend them, that is to say, quite simply, what they have in common with them: bodily positions and movements, functions of speech, the parcelling out of

¹⁶ Ma qui accidenti! Già la sinfonia d'apertura, eseguita al buio dal coro parlato (o da entrambi i cori?) ti caccia veramente nel mezzo d'un turbine, ti comunica la trepidazione e l'eccitamento diretto, immediato, d'un fatto di cronaca. But here, damn it! Already the opening symphony, to the sound of the choir speaking in the dark (or is it both choirs? You really search in the midst of a whirlwind, it tells you the trepidation and direct, immediate excitement of a true story. Massimo Mila 'Le Parole non suonano da sole. Berio alla Piccola Scala', in *L'Espresso* (5 June, 1963), trans. author's own.

¹⁷ Norie Neumark, 'Doing things with voices: Performativity and Voice' in *Voice: vocal aesthetics and digital arts and media*, eds. Norie Neumark, Ross Gibson, and Theo van Leeuwen (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2010), 96-118.

¹⁸ Jacques Rancière, *The politics of aesthetics: the distribution of the sensible*, Trans. Gabriel Rockhill (New York and London: Continuum 2004).

the visible and the invisible [...] the autonomy they can enjoy or the subversion they can claim credit for rest on the same foundation.¹⁹

In *Passaggio*, Berio and Sanguineti created a work whose overriding theme and intention was to provoke a spirit of questioning in its audience, holding up for critique what they saw as the violence and darkness of a contemporary consumer society, and challenging audiences to see themselves reflected in the depiction of repressive social forces. The work was intended as an explicit act of subversion of the social institutions and structures central to Italian society, namely a growing consumer economy, religion and the Catholic church, and the rituals and hierarchies of opera itself. In each case, the sounding voice's connotative multiplicity is key to the work's critique, in challenging the listener to search for and choose her own unique mode of identification and understanding of it.

Voice, body, and the Italian literary *neoavanguardia*

Passaggio's concern with the wider bodily and personal aspects of the voice, beyond its conventional musical and operatic incarnations, and the provocative, unconventional displays of the bodies and voices of the performers in an operatic context appeared shocking to the opera-goers of the 1960s, giving the work a sense of radical 'newness' that confused and outraged many. Umberto Eco, in an interview with Luciano Berio in 1984, described the reaction of the audience at the work's premiere:

I recall the first night of *Passaggio*. It was a memorable experience. The La Scala audience, who had booed *Wozzeck* a few years earlier, didn't understand what was happening, and was inclined to think it was a revolutionary attack. We were delighted – all of us.²⁰

However, its iconoclastic approach to the body, the voice, text, or indeed political intent did not arise in a vacuum, but rather characterised the spirit of the *neoavanguardia*, or 'new avant garde' movement at this time. To understand the context and aesthetic philosophies that underpin the use of the human voice in Berio's vocal works, it is worth

¹⁹ Rancière, *The politics of aesthetics*, 19.

²⁰ Luciano Berio, 'Eco in ascolto', *Contemporary Music Review*, 5/1 (1989), 5.

considering the historical and cultural antecedents of his innovative practices, and the enormous influence of the literary 'avant garde' on his ideas and practices around the human voice in music.

The concerns of language, meaning and linguistic expression evidenced throughout Berio's vocal oeuvre, had their parallel in the preoccupations of contemporary writers, poets and novelists in Italy of the 1950s and '60s. The literary avant-garde movement of the '50s and '60s has come to be identified as a sort of second avant garde of the 20th century in Italy, referred to often as the 'new' avant garde or *neoavanguardia*, to distinguish it from the earlier *Futurismo* movement of the early decades of the century. Both movements emerged from times of intense social and political upheaval in Italy, as well as reflecting periods of experimentalism and innovation throughout European culture. The 'Futurist' movement, dating from the around the time of Filippo Tommaso Marinetti's literary manifesto *Manifesto tecnico della letteratura futurista* (1912), proposed a revolutionised approach to writing, art and music, in which the conventional structures of language, meaning and representation were swept away by a new, energetic aesthetic in which surprising combinations and juxtapositions revised and overturned formal categories of knowledge.²¹ Marinetti, in the case of literature, proposed the abolition of syntax, adverbs and punctuation, in an effort to smash the customary links between words and their semantic meaning, and to elevate the status of the physical, material sounds of the words over their semantic signification. He proposed, as Robert Gordon notes, 'the primacy of matter over meaning and its attributes, sound, weight and noise.'²² Futurism had its adherents in visual art and music, with the paintings of Giacomo Balla and Umberto Boccioni breaking down conventions of direct representation and the barriers of frame, image and perspective.²³ Luigi Russolo's famous manifesto on the *Art of Noises* (*L'arte dei Rumori*) (1916) similarly rejected conventional musical structures and language in favour of the weight, timbre and quality of sounds, in effect asserting the noisy physicality of sound in a musical context over its signifying, hermeneutic functions.²⁴

²¹ Maurizio Calvesi, ed., *Marinetti e il futurismo* (Rome: Edizioni De Luca, 1994).

²² Robert S.C. Gordon, *Introduction to twentieth-century Italian literature: a difficult modernity* (London: Duckworth, 2005).

²³ Giovanni Lista, *Le Futurisme: création et avant-garde*, (Paris, Éditions L'Amateur, 2001); Giovanni Lista, *Giacomo Balla: futurismo e neofuturismo*, (Milan: Mudima, 2009).

²⁴ Luciano Chessa, *Luigi Russolo: Futurist. Noise, Visual Arts, and the Occult* (Berkeley; London: University of California Press, 2012).

While the Futurism movement lost much of its momentum in the wake of the First World War and the rise of Fascism in Italy, the ‘neoavanguardia’ emerged almost fifty years later, adopting and rejuvenating some of the first movement’s most iconoclastic elements.²⁵ This was a younger generation of writers and artists, highly politicised after the upheavals of Fascism, the Second World War, and Italy’s rapid transformation from a largely agrarian society to an industrialised economic power. The period of the late 1950s and early 1960s saw a particularly intense economic ‘boom’ or as some called it ‘the economic miracle’, in which Italian brands such as Olivetti, Zanussi and Fiat became international market leaders. The new artistic movement was politically left-leaning, in reaction to the years of dictatorship and war that had convulsed Italy mid-century, but also in response to what many saw as the increasing materialism of a new Italian consumer society, in which even cultural works were to be reduced to the status of saleable commodities.²⁶ The movement was also characterised by a spirit of playfulness and irony: Nanni Balestrini, one of the original members of the *neoavanguardia* collective ‘Gruppo ’63’, writes of this comic treatment of highly serious socio-political themes by Umberto Eco, another founder member of the collective, at their inaugural conference in Palermo in 1963.

Since the end of the 1950s the Hegelian-Marxist concept of alienation, revived by T.W. Adorno, had spread in the intellectual world like an obsession. So much so that for apotropaic purposes Umberto Eco had reduced it to a ditty (to the popular tune of *Arrivederci, Roma!*) that he cheerfully sang during relaxed moments of the conference of Palermo in 1963: ‘Alienaaaaation, is to give up the struggle, and surrender, only to the system [...] All you have to say, is, Alienaaaaation!’²⁷

²⁵ Gordon, *Introduction to twentieth-century Italian literature*, 166.

²⁶ Vivienne Suvini-Hand, *Sweet thunder: music and libretti in 1960s Italy* (London: Legenda 2006), 3.

²⁷ Dalla fine degli anni 50 il concetto hegel-marxiano di alienazione, rinverdito da T.W. Adorno, si era diffuso nel mondo intellettuale quasi come un’ossessione. Tanto che a scopo apotropaico Umberto Eco l’aveva ridotto a una canzoncina (sul tema allora in voga di *Arrivederci*) che cantavamo allegramente nei momenti di distensione del convegno palermitano del 1963: Alienazioone/ è rinunciare al problema/ ed arrendersi/ solo al sistema/ non possedersi più/ ma solo attendere .../L’industria ti foggia il destino/ a poco a poco/tu credi di essere libero/ma è solo un gioco.../ Alienazione/ è rinunciare a se stesso/ è un processo/ di perdizione.../ Forse rivoluzione/ può liberaarti.../ Ma se la tecnica impera/ la libertà è una chimera./ Non ti rimane che dire: Alieenaaazione! Nanni Balestrini, ‘Introduction’, in Nanni Balestrini, Alfredo Giuliani, eds., *Gruppo ’63, l’Antologia* (Turin: Testo & Immagine, 2002), 3, trans. author’s own. ‘Arrivederci Roma’ (‘Goodbye, Rome’) is the title and refrain of a popular Italian song, composed by Renato Rascel, with lyrics by Pietro Garinei and Sandro Giovannini. It was published in 1955 as part of the soundtrack of the Italo-American musical film with the same title, released as *Seven Hills of Rome* in English. Marc de Bruyn, *Arrivederci, Roma* [website]

<http://globalia.net/donlope/fz/songs/Arrivederci_Roma.html> accessed 20th February 2016.

The 'Gruppo '63' that Balestrini mentions was a distinct collective of writers and musicians formed out of the loose currents of *neoavanguardia* thought, emerging from the late 1950s around a philosophical and literary journal entitled *Il Verri*, and producing their first anthology of poetic works in 1961, entitled *I Novissimi (The newest of the new)*. The links between poets and musicians were strong from the outset of the group; in fact it was the composer Luigi Nono who proposed the German model of the 'Group '47' as a template for literary renewal and regeneration among Italian writers.²⁸ The 'Gruppo '63' took their inspiration from their German precursors in organising a series of formal annual events, the first of which took place in Palermo, intended to run alongside the 'International New Music Week' of 1963. This was, in the words of Balestrini,

a prestigious event of young avant garde composers. From October 2 to 9 the programme included the names of Ligeti, Evangelisti, Clementi, Pousseur, Donatoni, Cardew, Nono, Stockhausen, Berio, Bussotti, Kagel, Chiari, Schnebel, Feldman [...we were] invited to participate as writers who followed a path of renewal parallel to that of the musicians, alongside our own readings of works in progress (behind closed doors), we organised a film showing of eleven one-act plays in the Sala Scarlatti of the Conservatoire, and we took part in a lively series of lectures, from many voices, on theatre, music theatre, music, art, poetry and fiction.²⁹

This vibrant irreverent atmosphere among the 'Gruppo '63' certainly created a spirit of collaboration and openness of approach in matters of aesthetic reception and encounter among its members. Given the overriding concerns shared by writers and musicians of the limitations of conventional structures of semantic language and meaning, the human voice became a focus of their attention, a site of reconfigured reception and encounter on the part of the writer, performer and listener. Edoardo Sanguineti articulated this focus

²⁸ The 'Group 47' was an annual literary workshop set up by a young German generation of writers when faced with the task of rebuilding a literary tradition disrupted and destroyed by the Nazis and the war. Writers including Gunther Grass, Ingeborg Bachmann and Peter Handke all took part in these annual gatherings where writers compared and discussed their ongoing work, in an effort to re-establish a German literature. Balestrini, *Gruppo '63, l'Antologia*, 4.

²⁹ La prima occasione ci fu offerta nel 1963 da Francesco Agnello, che guidava la "Settimana internazionale Nuova Musica" di Palermo, prestigiosa manifestazione dei giovani compositori d'avanguardia. Dal 2 al 9 ottobre il programma comprendeva i nomi di Ligeti, Evangelisti, Clementi, Pousseur, Donatoni, Cardew, Nono, Stockhausen, Berio, Bussotti, Kagel, Chiari, Schnebel, Feldman... Invitati a partecipare in qualità di scrittori che seguivano un itinerario di rinnovamento parallelo a quello dei musicisti, oltre alle nostre reciproche letture di lavori in corso (a porte chiuse), organizzammo un mulinello di undici atti unici, messi in scena alla Sala Scarlatti del Conservatorio, e partecipammo a un movimentato ciclo di conferenze a più voci su teatro, teatro musicale, musica, pittura, poesia, narrative. Balestrini, *Gruppo '63, l'Antologia*, 4.

among his fellow writers and musicians on the role of the voice, and the importance of its relationship to language and meaning in their work, when discussing this period in an interview with Italian music scholar Luigi Pestalozza in 1981:

The word for the most significant representatives of that new [post-war] avant garde was very much felt to be the spoken word, as a vocal act or, as I like to say, as a corporeal act, one of bodily investment in language [...] In brief, bodily energy invested in the voice.³⁰

This assertion of the bodily aspect of the voice and the renegotiation of its relationship with language and meaning found expression in the modes of writing employed by Sanguineti and his fellow poets, in which the physical sounds of the vocalised words became as much the material of their written works as the meanings and imagery they communicated. In order to disrupt the habitual structures of 'verbal' and semantic decoding on the part of the listener, and to highlight and exploit the inherent instability of narrative and semantic meanings, words were sharply juxtaposed and used in highly unexpected combinations, jarring the listener's awareness away from his customary modes of interpretation and forcing his attention instead to cross conventional borderlines between sound and sense, between voice, body and word. David Osmond-Smith describes the inherent vocality of Sanguineti's poetic idiom in his first anthology as

the idiosyncratic stylistic mix to which he was to remain faithful for many years: an exclamatory vernacular rubbing up against multilingual fragments from literary sources [...] saved from bookishness by an unnervingly vivid evocation of the speaking voice.³¹

Similarly, the poet Nanni Balestrini described this style of writing with the evocative phrase 'stuzzicare le parole', that is, to pick at, or 'irritate' words and language out of their conventions and complacency.³²

This impulse towards the bodily in language, the disruptive physicality of the spoken word, can be clearly seen in the collaborative projects between writers and musicians of the 'Gruppo '63', and specifically between Luciano Berio, Umberto Eco, and Edoardo

³⁰ Edoardo Sanguineti, 'Critica Spettacolare della Spettacolarita: Conversazione con Edoardo Sanguineti di Luigi Pestalozza', in *Per Musica* (Modena Milano: Ricordi Mucchi, 1993), 14.

³¹ David Osmond-Smith, 'Voicing the Labyrinth: the Collaborations of Edoardo Sanguineti and Luciano Berio', *Twentieth-century music*, 9/1-2 (2012), 67.

³² Balestrini, *Gruppo '63, l'Antologia*, 6.

Sanguineti. The *neoavanguardia's* emphasis on the physical, sonic and musical content of words and texts, and its natural links with musical and vocal works was emphasised by Sanguineti in an interview in 1993; recalling his first collection of poetry *Laborintus* (1956) he commented that 'my model was a type of poetry that could be spoken like the *Sprechsgesang* of Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*'.³³ Florian Mussgnug, in his article on the cross-fertilization between music and the literary avant garde movement in Italy at this time, comments that,

Like Eco's and Berio's reflections on Joyce, Sanguineti's remarks imply the idea of a continuous spectrum of vocal expression, ranging from ordinary speech to musical sound.³⁴

Vocal music then was the perfect testing ground for these *recherches* into words, meanings and material sound, and for a renegotiation of the conventional relationships between writer, performer and receiver. For Sanguineti, collaboration with Berio offered the opportunity to further his experiments in language, text and voice in a performative musical setting. In Berio, he said, he had found a composer

whose work on language was continuous, harmonious, with his researches in sound. And I want to emphasize one point, namely that, in the case of Berio, the relationship with the human voice, the relationship with the verbal material, was a fundamental relationship.³⁵

Before the inaugural conference of 1963, Berio and Eco too had already met and collaborated on a number of projects that mined the rich overlapping territories between language, voice and music.³⁶ They explored the inherent musicality of vocalised words in their 1957 project *Onomatopaeia nel linguaggio poetico*,³⁷ and out of this came the 1958 tape piece *Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)*. Here the voice of Cathy Berberian, reading passages

³³ Il mio modello era un poesia che fosse dicibile come lo *sprechsgesang* del *Pierrot Lunaire* di Schönberg. Edoardo Sanguineti and Fabio Gambaro, *Colloquio con Edoardo Sanguineti: quarant'anni di cultura italiana attraverso i ricordi di un poeta intellettuale* (Milano: Anabasi, 1993), 26.

³⁴ Florian Mussgnug, 'Writing Like Music: Luciano Berio, Umberto Eco and the New Avant-Garde', *Comparative Critical Studies*, 5/1, (2008), 87.

³⁵ [...] che poteva lavorare sul terreno del linguaggio in maniera omogenea, armonica rispetto alla sue ricerca sonora. E voglio subito sottolineare un punto, che cioè, nel caso di Berio, il rapporto con la voce umana, il rapporto con il materiale verbale, era un rapporto fondamentale. Sanguineti, *Per Musica*, 12.

³⁶ Mussgnug, 'Writing Like Music', 84.

³⁷ This piece was intended as part of a radio programme due for broadcast by the Italian national broadcaster, Radiotelevisione italiana, but was rejected by the directors of the station. They felt that it was incomprehensible and musically inaccessible for their wider radio audience. David Osmond-Smith, *Berio* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 61.

from James Joyce's *Ulysses* in a variety of languages was recorded and electronically manipulated; the abstractions of textual meaning are constantly punctured and subverted by the very materiality and uniqueness of her unmistakable voice. While Berio and Eco drew on the *Sirens* chapter of *Ulysses* for the texts of the work, a chapter in which, according to Hugh Kenner, Joyce 'thus freezes into a book the life of Dublin, chiefly its vocal life,' the homage paid by the tape piece could as much refer to the final chapter of Joyce's work, the soliloquy of Molly Bloom, in which the profound individuality of the character's inner voice, and the intensely physical and erotic dimensions of her told experience cut through and destabilise the abstractions of a written text.³⁸ Here Berberian's intensely characterful voice pays tribute to that of her fictional predecessor, as both voices have, in effect, 'stuzzicato', have poked, prodded and picked away at the conventional edifices of conventional grammatical language.

Gruppo '63, *l'Opera aperta*, and Berio's musical language

The fascination with the materiality of the sounding voice explored in *Passaggio* can be traced as emerging from the literary experimentalism of the Italian *neoavanguardia*, and its political conscience a reflection of the decidedly left-leaning agenda of the Gruppo '63. To move closer however to an understanding of the concept of the 'open voice', of the explicit demonstration in a musical work of the vast array of the voice's potential intersecting meanings, it is useful to look in more detail at Umberto Eco's seminal publication *Opera Aperta* (1963): its aesthetic theories of 'openness' and the importance of the role of the receiver in the creation of artworks; and its close relationship with the musical works, both instrumental and vocal, of Berio.

A poetics of collaborative creation, between the author and the reader, forms one of the key concepts of Umberto Eco's book *Opera Aperta* first published in 1962, which became a quasi-manifesto for members of the Gruppo '63 and adherents of the *neoavanguardia* sensibility.³⁹ In it, Eco discusses his ideas on the semiotic 'openness' of particular works

³⁸ Hugh Kenner, *Flaubert, Joyce and Beckett: The Stoic Comedians* (London: Dalkey Archive Press, 1962), 47.

³⁹ The 1962 publication *Opera Aperta* (The Open Work) consisted of a collection of Eco's essays on the subject of the collaboration of the addressee of a work of art. The central essay 'La poetica dell'opera aperta' (The poetics of the open work) was first published in 1959, then became the keynote of subsequent collections *The Open Work* in 1962 and the English language collection *The Role of the Reader*

of art, proposing that the radical differences between ‘traditional’ and challenging ‘modern’ works lay in the ambiguous character of modern art, allowing the work to be viewed, read or heard in a variety of different ways by different receivers, laying itself ‘open’ in effect to no one definitive interpretation, but to a multiplicity of understandings or readings. The nature of traditional works of art, he argued, is as a complete and *closed* form which directs the responses of the addressee towards one intended meaning of the work, enshrined in it by the author or artist or composer at the point of its creation. Viewers, listeners and readers of these works are intended to derive just one way of understanding what a painting or sculpture represents, the tune and harmony of a piece of music, or what a novel or poem is ‘about’. ‘In this sense’, he wrote, ‘the author presents a finished product with the intention that this particular composition should be appreciated and received in the same form as he devised it.’⁴⁰ Modern art works of this sort on the contrary, are constructed so as to invite a variety of different interpretations, and to contain a multiplicity of possible meanings, of which none is the dominant or main one. Eco gives the example of Joyce’s text *Finnegan’s Wake* as a work that is systematically ambiguous, presenting the reader with a ‘field of possibilities’, a number of possible meanings or readings of the text, and leaving it to her to decide which route to take through the work.⁴¹

The evolution of Eco’s theory of the ‘opera in movimento’, that is, the ‘work in movement’ or ‘work in process’ occurred in close relation with the theoretical and compositional forays of many of his musical counterparts at this time; one of the first essays outlining his idea of the ‘open’ artwork was published in the musical periodical *Incontri Musicali*, a journal curated by Luciano Berio and intended as a forum for the discussion of new musical practice and avant-garde experimentalism. The journal, which only ever ran to four issues put out between 1956 and 1960, ran alongside the ‘Incontri Musicali’ series of concerts, which programmed ‘early’ and baroque music together with the latest contemporary musical compositions; both the journal and the concerts grew out of the intellectual, literary and musical collaboration that was occurring at the newly founded RAI’s *Studio di Fonologia Musicale* in Milan between figures including Berio, Maderna,

in 1979. Umberto Eco, ‘The poetics of the open work’ in *The open work*, trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989) pp 1-23; Umberto Eco, *The role of the reader: explorations in the semiotics of texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1979).

⁴⁰ Eco, *The open work*, 3.

⁴¹ David Robey, ‘Introduction’, in *The Open Work* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1989), x.

Eco, and writer and ethnomusicologist Roberto Leydi.⁴² However brief its life, the *Incontri Musicali* journal published articles by a number of hugely influential composers, including Pierre Boulez, John Cage, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Henri Pousseur, and Berio himself, in which the men outlined and discussed their developing aesthetic ideas of new musical and artistic composition. In one issue in 1959, dedicated to the concept of form, and exploring ideas of formal musical organisation, there appeared John Cage's 'Lecture on Nothing'; Pierre Boulez's article 'Alea' on the application of chance procedures in composition; a discussion of the relationship between music and words in Berio's 'Poesia e Musica – un'esperienza'; Henri Pousseur's exploration of new musical formalism in 'Forma e Pratica Musicale'; and the essay 'L'opera in movimento e la coscienza dell'epoca' by Umberto Eco.⁴³ Eco's piece, with minor edits, became the central chapter of his subsequent book 'L'opera aperta' published three years later; in it the author drew directly on three musical works, by Pousseur, Berio and Stockhausen, as the opening bases for his argumentation and demonstration of an 'open work' in practice.⁴⁴ The close association and evolution of the 'open work' idea within the pages of the avant-garde musical journal continued in subsequent issues, with further articles by Eco and a response from critic and musicologist Fedele D'Amico published in September 1960.⁴⁵ The appearance of these forerunners to Eco's seminal publication, in a musical rather than literary journal attests to the close intertwining and cross-fertilization of ideas of formal organisation that were exchanged between the musicians, avant-garde composers, intellectuals and writers of this period of creativity in post-war Milan.

Eco's aesthetic theories that included the 'receiver' of a work in the collaborative construction of the artwork, had enormous resonances with the developing critical approaches of various French post-structuralist commentators, most notably the

⁴² Rossana Dalmonde and Bálint András Varga, *Luciano Berio: Two Interviews*, trans. and ed. David Osmond-Smith (New York, London: Boyars, 1985), 53.

⁴³ Pierre Boulez, 'Alea', *Incontri musicali - Quaderni internazionali di musica contemporanea*, 3 (1959, agosto), 3-15; John Cage, 'Lecture on Nothing', *Incontri musicali - Quaderni internazionali di musica contemporanea*, 3 (1959, agosto), 128-149; Luciano Berio, 'Poesia e musica - un'esperienza', *Incontri musicali - Quaderni internazionali di musica contemporanea*, 3 (1959, agosto), 98-111; Henri Pousseur, 'Forma e pratica musicale', *Incontri musicali - Quaderni internazionali di musica contemporanea*, 3 (1959, agosto), 70-91; Umberto Eco, 'L'opera in movimento e la coscienza dell'epoca', *Incontri musicali - Quaderni internazionali di musica contemporanea*, 3 (1959, agosto), 32-54.

⁴⁴ See Umberto Eco, 'The poetics of the open work' in *The Open Work*, trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1989), 1-23.

⁴⁵ Umberto Eco, 'Apertura e «informazione» nella struttura musicale: uno strumento d'indagine', *Incontri musicali - Quaderni internazionali di musica contemporanea*, 4 (1960, settembre), 57-88; Fedele D'Amico, 'Dell'opera aperta, ossia dell'avanguardia', *Incontri musicali - Quaderni internazionali di musica contemporanea*, 4 (1960, settembre), 89-104.

'reception' theory of Roland Barthes which espoused the importance of the reader in the semiotic construction of a literary text. Texts such as Barthes' 1967 essay 'The death of the author' proposed that the author's 'intention' for a work became less important in the work's formation than the reader's own engagement with the text, saying 'there is one place where this [text] is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author.'⁴⁶ Eco specifically drew out this parallel in his introduction to the 1979 English language collection of his essays *The Role of the Reader*, when he cites Barthes' theory of the 'model reader' as an influence on his own theoretical development over the 1960s and 70s; for Barthes too, the 'receiver' actively collaborates in the process of construction of the text or artwork that she ultimately experiences:

Those texts that according to Barthes (1973) are able to produce the 'jouissance' of the unexhausted virtuality of their expressive plane succeed in this effect just because they have been planned to invite Model Readers to reproduce their own processes of deconstruction by a plurality of free interpretive choices.⁴⁷

In 'The poetics of the open work', Eco argued that while certain 'modern' works are demonstrably ambiguous and open to myriad interpretations, his theory of aesthetic 'openness' is in fact applicable to all works of art. While the artist may have fashioned the work with the intention of conveying to the receiver a particular meaning, nevertheless, the receiver necessarily brings to her perception of the work an array of her own particular associations and resonances, unique and specific to each individual:

As he reacts to the play of stimuli and his own response to their patterning, the individual addressee is bound to supply his own existential credentials, the sense conditioning which is peculiarly his own, a defined culture, a set of tastes, personal inclinations and prejudices. Thus his comprehension of the original artifact is always modified by his particular and individual perspective.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Roland Barthes, 'The death of the author', in *Image music text* (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 148. First published in English in the American journal *Aspen* in 1967, followed by its French publication in 1968 in the magazine *Manteia*. The similarities and relationship between the *neoavanguardia* aesthetics of openness in the artwork, with the critical theories of Roland Barthes, is explored further in Chapter 3, in the discussion of Barthes' influence on the libretto of *Un re in ascolto* (1983).

⁴⁷ Eco, *The role of the reader*, 40; Roland Barthes, 'Introduction à l'analyse structurale des récits', *Communications* 8.S/Z (Paris: Seuil, 1970); Roland Barthes, *Le Plaisir du texte* (Paris: Seuil, 1973); Roland Barthes, 'The death of the author', 142-8.

⁴⁸ Eco, *The Open Work*, 3.

The importance of the role of the receiver in the creation of her own unique experience of the work is underlined by Eco, as he argues that every instance of a work's reception is therefore a new and unique realisation of it.

Hence, every reception of a work of art is both an *interpretation* and *performance* of it, because in every reception the work takes on a fresh perspective for itself.⁴⁹

While this potential for individually constructed readings may be implicit in every work of art, Eco argued that the major characteristic of much avant garde art was the conscious enfolding of this ambiguity into the form and fabric of the works, through a variety of means such as structural indeterminacy, or the subversion of conventional narrative, linguistic or representational methods. To illustrate these ideas, Eco looked to contemporary music, citing in the opening paragraphs of his essay 'The poetics of the open work' specific works by Karlheinz Stockhausen, Henri Pousseur, Pierre Boulez and Luciano Berio as examples that allow the performer a high degree of freedom and autonomy in how to play the piece. Through the conscious engagement of the performer's own choices and decisions in the performance of the work, each realisation of the composer's piece becomes a uniquely constructed musical experience, displaying and consciously performing its difference from every other instantiation of the piece. He describes the methods of performing Stockhausen's *Klavierstück XI* (1956), *Scambi* (1957) by Pousseur, and Boulez's *Third Sonata for Piano* (1958), all of which are constructed of separate sections of composed music, to be performed in a sequence chosen spontaneously by the performer, rather than pre-arranged in a given order. The indeterminacy of Berio's *Sequenza I for solo flute* (1958) consists of the performer's freedom to choose the length of time she wishes to hold the notes within the framework of the given note sequence, and within the parameters of the tempo marking which she is also free to choose. While the practical intervention of the performer or instrumentalist can be seen as markedly different to the engagement of the listener or receiver of a work, Eco qualifies this interpolation of one role for the other when he states that

For the purposes of aesthetic analysis...both cases can be seen as different manifestations of the same interpretive attitude. Every 'reading', 'contemplation', or 'enjoyment' of a work of art represents a tacit or private form of 'performance'.⁵⁰

⁴⁹ Ibid., 4.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 251.

The active collaboration of the instrumentalist with the composer in the creation of each performance of these works becomes in Eco's account an analogous model for the role of the reader, listener or viewer of any given artwork. The musical examples that Eco cites are key examples of what he calls 'works in movement' or mobile works, where the author or composer 'offers the interpreter, the performer, the addressee a work *to be completed*'.⁵¹

The reciprocal influence between Eco's literary thought and Berio's compositional practices can be seen in the variety of ways in which a 'poetics of openness' is displayed in Berio's music. Eco, in his treatise, argues that such 'openness' can be implemented in a work by a variety of different means and at different levels of formal engagement with the work: he cites the literary examples of Mallarmé's *Livre* in contrast with Joyce's *Finnegan's Wake* to illustrate how in the first case, the reader actually would arrange the pages of the book in a number of different sequences, while the reader of Joyce's novel instead perceives a number of different patterns of meaning offered by the author's language. Similarly, modes of 'openness' occur throughout Berio's music over a number of different musical levels, sometimes in terms of large scale compositional structure, or the style of musical and harmonic writing, or through the rich and complex intersections of text, reference and meaning in his 'collage' style libretti.

One example of such 'openness' in the overall construction and execution of a large-scale work can be found in the music theatre piece *Opera*, composed in 1969-70: the work is formed of separate ensemble and solo 'numbers', which can be performed together in the sequence given in the score, or as chosen by the performers and producers. The pieces themselves are intended to be performed either together to make up a complete 'opera', or separately as stand-alone vocal-orchestral works.⁵² Gianfranco Vinay discusses the poetics of 'openness' at the level of Berio's eclectic musical language, proposing that the composer's use of a variety of musical idioms and styles, such as serialism, electroacoustic techniques and unconventional musical relationships between voices and instruments, or between soloists and orchestra, all display an ambiguity of musical intention characteristic of the philosophy of the 'open work'. He proposes that rather than slavishly adopting an idiom or musical procedure which imposes a strict musical logic on the composed work, Berio's music displays a complex network of intersections and 'resonances': between

⁵¹ Ibid., 21.

⁵² These 'separate' pieces include *Melodrama*, in which a nervous tenor psyches himself up for a performance through ridiculous sounding self-talk and snatches of song, and the vocal piece *E vó*, which is subtitled 'Sicilian Lullaby from *Opera*.'

soloist and orchestra - as in the case of *Concerto pour deux pianos et orchestra* (1972-73) or *Alternim* (1996-7) for viola, clarinet and orchestra; between electronic and non-electronic sounds and techniques such as in the works *Laborintus II* (1965) and *Altra Voce* (1995) for mezzo soprano, alto flute and electronics; and between voices and instruments such as in the larger work *Coro* (1975-77) in which each instrument of the orchestra is paired with a single choral voice, creating a texture of exchange and resonance between the two forces that blurs traditional musical distinctions between them.

The role of resonance, physical and metaphorical, in his work shows up his fidelity to the poetics of 'the open work'. Throughout his work, we can see many ways he's done this, on numerous different levels of metaphorical implication [...] There is a purely sonic, musical level that manifests in Berio's predilection for musical forms and genres in resonance [...he] reintroduced the voice into constantly renewed harmonic contexts, created a complex polyphony which was at the same time a game of sonic reflections, and of imitations resonating between the voices and the harmonic structure.⁵³

Irna Priore discusses Berio's adoption of the aesthetics of the 'open work' as an answer to the disputes raging in the western contemporary music scene at the time, characterised by the disagreement between John Cage and Pierre Boulez, especially at the 1958 Darmstadt summer school, as to the importance of total indeterminacy in music or the need for total structural control.⁵⁴ In response to Cage's work *Music of Changes* (1951), which is based entirely on the aleatory method of tossing coins to determine musical outcomes, Boulez wrote to Cage, 'the only thing, forgive me, which I am not happy with, is the method of absolute chance. On the contrary, I believe chance must be extremely controlled'.⁵⁵

For Berio, this dialectic between total freedom and total control found a resolution in the poetics of a 'controlled disorder' espoused by Eco in *The open work*, in a musical language and process that invited the collaboration of the listener with the composer in the

⁵³ Gianfranco Vinay, 'Berio: Le chant des sirènes et la poétique de l'œuvre "ouverte" aux résonances', in Danielle Cohen-Levinas, ed., *Omaggio a Luciano Berio* (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2006), 26-7.

⁵⁴ Irna Priore, 'Vestiges of Twelve-Tone Practice as Compositional Process in Berio's *Sequenza I* for Flute', in Janet Halfyard, ed., *Berio's Sequenzas: essays on performance, composition and analysis* (Aldershot, England; Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2007), 191-208.

⁵⁵ Cit. in Christopher Shultis, 'Cage and Europe', in David Nicholls, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Cage* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 35

completion of each unique experience of the work.⁵⁶ Italian musicologist Alessandro Arbo picks up on the demands made of the listener by Berio's music, and the centrality of the listener's own agency in the creation and understanding of the work. This process requires a willingness to reorient customary modes of listening in order to explore more fully the musical and sonic possibilities offered. As Arbo comments,

It has often been said that Berio has himself already suggested, on a number of occasions [...] the key to his 'aesthetic' lies in a development of the possibilities of listening. His work asks the listener to upset habits, adopt new strategies, new perceptual processes.⁵⁷

Berio himself commented on this requirement for an array of listening styles when approaching music, and their acknowledgement and invitation into the process of composition, in the first of his Norton lectures at Harvard University, delivered in 1993:

Extreme situations, from the simple to the very complex, will entail different and often contradictory ways of listening, from the most analytical to the most global, from the most active to the most passive. This instability, this mobility of perspectives, must be carefully composed as part of a meaningful musical architecture, and occasionally can stretch to the point of opening itself to outside visitors, to strangers, to happenings, to musical figures coherently loaded with associations.⁵⁸

When we view the voice through the prism of these aesthetic theories, the radical experimentalism of the literary and musical *neoavanguardia*, and the importance within this movement of the aesthetic principles of 'openness' and listener collaboration, we can see more clearly a model of the human voice predicated on 'openness' to the listener. Just as Gianfranco Vinay describes 'the role of resonance, physical and metaphorical' between

⁵⁶ Eco, *The open work*, 65; Priore, 'Vestiges of Twelve-Tone Practice', 195.

⁵⁷ On a souvent répété ce que Berio avait déjà suggéré lui-même à plusieurs reprises [...] la clé de son 'esthétique' réside dans un certain développement des possibilités d'écoute. Son œuvre demande à l'auditeur de bouleverser ses habitudes, d'adopter de nouvelles stratégies, de nouvelles démarches perceptives. Alessandro Arbo, 'Hiéroglyphes (la voix, le signe, l'akoumène)', in Danielle Cohen-Levinas, ed., *Omaggio a Luciano Berio* (L'Harmattan: Paris, 2006), 14.

⁵⁸ Luciano Berio, *Remembering the future* (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Harvard University Press, 2006), 14.

multiple levels of meaning and musical structure within Berio's works, so too do we find this 'resonance' at the level of the human voice in these works, invoking simultaneously the various meanings and associations, both metaphorical and physical, enshrined in the sound of a human voice, and calling on the listener to recognise this complexity and multiplicity. In *Passaggio*, we find the voice itself framed as an open work, explicitly drawing on the voice's evocative multivalency to illustrate, but more, to activate the intersubjective space the voice inhabits, challenging the listener to change the terms of the transaction between audience and stage, their choice in this case not just aesthetic but, as Eco comments, moral, social, and deeply political.

***Passaggio*: Staging the 'open voice'**

The centrality of the open voice, resonating with the myriad experiences of a human life, to the aesthetic, musical and dramatic construction of *Passaggio* cannot be overstated; its intersection with the work's musical text and the libretto, activating and 'giving flesh' to the words, characters and ideas was key to the intended directness of the piece. By Sanguineti's reckoning, the sound of the human voice did not simply convey a written text to a listener, but completely transformed it into something new, a 'biological metamorphosis' of text into something beyond the writer's control or intention, creating a new connection between vocalist and listener beyond the pages of a score or script. His libretto, he commented, 'is based on the principle of biological metamorphosis of the text, its concrete immersion in a voice of the body's vocality. I would talk about the "viscerality of the human voice".'⁵⁹

Italian musicologist Cecilia Minchiacchi likens the text of the score and libretto to a two dimensional painting of static characters, while in Sanguineti and Berio's works, these immobile figures are brought to life in the dynamic, immediate sound of the voice. She makes the point that in *Passaggio*, the sound of the voices, their interactions and behaviours, in fact *is* the text of the piece. In a performance of this work, she writes,

⁵⁹ Si basano su questo principio della metamorfosi biologica del testo, del suo calarsi concreto in una voce nella vocalità corporea. Sarei tanto di parlare di 'visceralità della voce umana. Sanguineti, *Per musica*, 15.

‘characters in a fresco, immobile and mute, take flesh: [...they] are *shown* in voice. The text is totally and completely made of voices.’⁶⁰

The importance of the sounding voice as a basis for the interaction between stage and stalls, performer and listener, between individuals and crowds, between, as Eco puts it, ‘man and man’, is underscored by the piece’s constant references to the voice, to modes of utterance and calls for silence or speech. One example of such self-conscious framing of vocal behaviour and utterance is highlighted by Giordano Ferrari, in his extensive analysis of the musical and dramatic structure of *Passaggio*, as he traces the transition of the solo singer’s line from full operatic technique to speech, shouts and screams, over the course of the work’s six stations.⁶¹ In the first two stations, Lei’s lines are largely delivered in characteristic trained bel canto style, with notable exceptions on the words ‘Urlando’ and ‘Disse’, meaning ‘Screamed’ and ‘Spoken’, which are delivered in her speaking voice. (Fig. 2.2) By the final station, the situation has reversed, as Lei is required to shout and scream her line at the audience, with the exception of one word ‘dissero’, meaning ‘they said,’ which, ironically, is sung. (Fig. 2.3)



Fig. 2.2

⁶⁰ Personaggi esposti in un affresco, immobili, muti, prendono carne: sono da Sanguineti esposti in voce. Il testo è tutto, e interamente, fatto da voci. Cecilia Bello Minchiacchi, ‘“Vociferazione” e “discorso ininterrotto”: aspetti testuali nelle prime collaborazioni di Berio e Sanguineti (1961-1965)’, in Giordano Ferrari, ed., *Le théâtre musical de Luciano Berio I: De Passaggio à la Vera storia* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2016), 127.

⁶¹ Ferrari, *Les Debuts du theatre musicale d'avant garde en Italie*, 85-104.

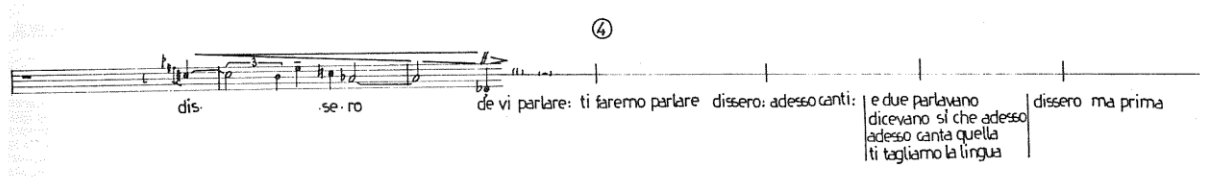


Fig.2.3

This interplay of vocal delivery with its self-conscious description and the almost madrigalian congruence, and jarring incongruence between words and their delivery, thrusts the sounding voice forward in the overall musical and dramatic texture of the piece, indicating something worth listening to beyond simply its words or notes.

This attention to the voice echoes and resonates through the work, at a number of different levels, both ‘physical and metaphorical’ as Gianfranco Vinay observed. By his account the resonances between these different levels of perception and engagement ‘shows up [Berio’s] fidelity to the poetics of “the open work”,’ inviting listeners to hear different paths, be they musical, harmonic, structural or narrative, through the work.⁶² In the same way, the work shows the voice’s ‘openness’ to interpretation, allowing a number of different potential meanings to emerge and flourish, inflected by the various intersecting themes and narrative threads that are woven through the work. Like a prism diffracting a beam of light into its constituent colours, the open work’s numerous potential narrative and musical aspects allow the voice to show multiple sides, all still facets of the same voice, but appearing differently depending on how it is viewed - or rather, heard.

An exploration of some of the themes that run through *Passaggio* can demonstrate this multiplicity of potential vocal meanings - how the same utterance or vocal behaviour can resonate and signify quite differently depending on the listener’s chosen path of understanding of the work. Given the purposeful ‘openness’ of construction of the piece, my efforts to gather themes and references together into discrete categories for closer analysis might seem counter to its fragmented *neoavanguardia* spirit; suffice it to say that the following categories are intended as a loose guide to various paths through the work, and like all maps, might suggest potential routes, but are by no means intended to prescribe or preclude any others. Here then, for the purposes of this thesis, are three loose thematic categories, in which the voice can be heard to resonate and signify in multiple

⁶² Gianfranco Vinay, ‘Berio: Le chant des sirènes et la poétique de l’oeuvre “ouverte” aux résonances’, in Danielle Cohen-Levinas, ed., *Omaggio a Luciano Berio* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 2006), 26.

ways: (1) the relation of the individual to a repressive social power; (2) the effects of consumerism and commodification on Opera and culture; and (3) the role and practice of religion in the maintenance of social structures.

1) The individual and the crowd

The victimisation of a vulnerable individual by an overarching power, whether political, social or religious, is a topic that runs through *Passaggio*, the work being, as musicologist Angela Carone observed, a means whereby ‘the two authors played out their condemnation of social reality’.⁶³ In the piece, the vulnerable individual is a nameless female protagonist whose very anonymity and lack of definition allows the incarnation of numerous other women of the past, who have been victims of injustice, punished for their non-conformity, or whose vulnerability has been exploited by others. Originally Berio and Sanguineti intended to build *Passaggio* around extracts from Franz Kafka’s *Letters to Milena*, and the prison diaries of Rosa Luxembourg, and while only fragments of these texts found their way into the final libretto, the experiences of these two women echo through the work.⁶⁴ Milena Jesenská, the Czech journalist and writer, conducted an impassioned correspondence with Franz Kafka whom she only met with twice in person; during the Nazi occupation of Prague she was part of the underground resistance assisting persecuted Jewish and political refugees to escape, until she was arrested, brutally interrogated, and finally died in Ravensbrück concentration camp in 1944. Rosa Luxembourg was a Marxist writer, economist and political activist, whose condemnation of Germany’s involvement in the First World War led to her arrest and imprisonment for two and half years; her best known quotation comes from a pamphlet written and smuggled out of prison during her incarceration:

⁶³ Carone, *Treccani Scuola*, accessed 9th September 2013.

⁶⁴ Ute Brüderman, *Das Musiktheater von Luciano Berio* (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 2007).

Freedom only for the supporters of the government, only for the members of a party – however numerous they may be – is no freedom at all. Freedom must always be the freedom of the one who thinks differently.⁶⁵

Her support for the German workers' uprising in 1919 resulted in her murder by government supported paramilitaries, and her body being dumped in a canal in Berlin. As well as historical figures, *Passaggio*'s text recalls fictional and mythological women. Latin quotations from Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* (1st Century BC) feature the sacrifice of Iphigeneia by her father King Agamemnon to appease the gods, while references to Jean Genet's play *Le Balcon* (1956) abound in Lei's direct final address to the audience, echoing the monologue of the play's character Madame Irma, the cynical Madam whose business is the trade of vulnerable women's bodies and lives.⁶⁶ Even the pairing of *Passaggio* with the opera *Dido and Aeneas* on the opening night's programme is not insignificant, given the eponymous heroine's echoes with Lei's situation.⁶⁷

All of these echoes and references suggest facets of the protagonist Lei's undefined situation and identity, while allowing her onstage ordeal to remain open to the audience's own interpretations and associations. Central to the enactment of Lei's victimisation is the interplay of voices, those of the chorus, the audience and the protagonist, with each other and with their antithesis, silence. From the very outset, the tension between the sound of Lei's voice and the silence her aggressors wish to inflict on her is made quite explicit. Giordano Ferrari, in his 2001 analysis of the vocal writing in *Passaggio*, briefly mentions references to silence as a noteworthy aspect of the opening bars of the work:

Overture: The work starts in shadows and in silence. Very gently, in the pianissimo, coro B break the silence with a 'verbal polyphony' centred on S, that we can also interpret as another reference to silence.⁶⁸

References to silence pervade the first Stazione, in the use of the words for 'silence' in a number of languages including French, English and Italian, and through the constant

⁶⁵ Rosa Luxemburg, 'The Problem of Dictatorship', *Marxist Internet Archive* [Online archive] <<https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1918/russian-revolution/ch06.htm>> accessed 5th September 2016.

⁶⁶ Sala, *Le théâtre musical de Luciano Berio I*, 65-94.

⁶⁷ Resonances abound with other nameless operatic and theatrical female figures; *Nach Damaskus* (1898 – 1905) August Strindberg's trilogy of plays also uses the form of a 'station drama' and features a character called 'the lady'; a nameless 'woman' features in Arnold Schoenberg's *Erwartung* (1909); Luigi Nono's *Intolleranza* (1960) shares similar themes of oppression and alienation of the individual, here an unnamed man and woman, by the violence and brutality of modern capitalism.

⁶⁸ Ferrari, *Les debuts de theatre musical d'avant garde en Italie*, 106.

reinforcement of the 's' and 't' consonants from these words. The stage remains in darkness as this polyphony grows, surrounding and immersing the audience in a sibilant hissing *mêlée*. The opening bars hear Coro B whisper and speak the words 'Ma adesso... ma in silence/silenzio/still/silence' (but now...but in silence), identifying themselves with the silence in the auditorium, and with the silent audience who await the performance. Later repetitions of the phrase 'in questo silenzio' followed by a stream of sibilant words and consonants referring to society and to social order, such as 'conservando', 'saving', 'social' and 'l'ordine sociale', reinforce this link between a repressive quashing of any discordant voice, and the maintenance of a rigid social order, the sense of docile acquiescence underlined by phrases like 'sleeping', 'certainly' and 'chacun à sa place'. These links are underlined by the choristers' emphasis of the 's' and 't' sounds throughout the spoken polyphony, from meaningless 'S' and 'Ssst!' utterances, or in words such as 'sociale', bien sur', 'certainly', 'adesso', 'silence' and 'silenzio'. This emphasis on 's' and 't' sounds gives the entire *mélange* a whispering, depersonalised and sinister texture, as the largely unvoiced consonants lack the vocal substance and humanity of a fully voiced chorus. (Fig. 2.4)

STAZIONE I
"INTROITUS"

Coro B
I (ma come resistendo) (ma come resistendo)
II (ma come resistendo) (ma come resistendo)
III (ma come resistendo) (ma come resistendo)
IV (ma come resistendo) (ma come resistendo)
V (ma come resistendo) (ma come resistendo)

ma adesso
ma adesso
ma adesso
ma adesso
ma adesso

da heisst
adesso: zitti
e poi ssst
S
c'est à dire

that is conservando that is saving of course S of course
saving of course S
saving of course S
saving of course S
saving of course S

ciòè saving ordine S
ciòè saving ordine S
ciòè saving ordine S
ciòè saving ordine S
ciòè saving ordine S

achtung S voilà chacun à sa place
achtung S voilà chacun à sa place
achtung S voilà chacun à sa place
achtung S voilà chacun à sa place
achtung S voilà chacun à sa place

come conservando saving natürllich
come conservando saving natürllich
come conservando saving natürllich
come conservando saving natürllich
come conservando saving natürllich

ma ordine natürllich S
ma ordine natürllich S
ma ordine natürllich S
ma ordine natürllich S
ma ordine natürllich S

1
silenziò (ssst!) e:
ognuno al proprio posto ordine
si capisce (nel silenzio)
e:
(to your places!) si capisc

buon completo sparo lento, inavvertito:
spara completamente buio (e vuoto)

Fig 2.4

The polyphony takes on the air of an aggressive crowd ordering a prisoner's silence and obedience, with shouts of 'be quiet', 'The prisoner! Say, you!', 'now don't you move', 'à ta place' and 'halt!' directed at the darkened stage. (Fig. 2.5)

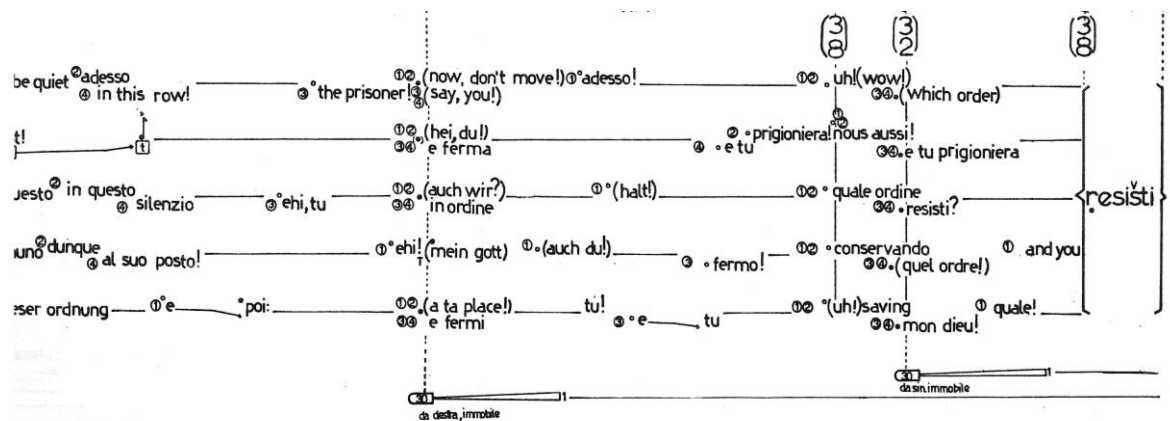


Fig. 2.5

As the lights rise, we see Lei, according to the stage directions 'immobile, spalle al muro sull'estremo fondo della scena come colta di sorpresa' (motionless, cornered at the furthest end of the stage, as if startled). Coro A offers commentary and exhortations from the orchestra pit; the soprano and alto lines of Coro A identify Coro B as 'voi ricchi, come divini spettri' (you, the rich, like holy spirits) while the tenor and bass parts address Lei as 'tu, prigioniera' (you, the prisoner). The four parts all then sing to the prisoner, urging her to resist her tormentors: 'oh prigioniera, resisti!'

In the final bars of Stazione I, we hear Lei's efforts at resistance, as she tries literally to make her voice heard over the hostile crowd. Her entry on a high $b\sharp''$ is a sustained closed mouth 'mm' consonant, marked triple *piano*, inaudible beneath waves of choral sound marked triple *forte* in the score. Her mouth opens with an ambiguous 'e' vowel, again on a high $b\sharp''$ marked triple *piano*, swelling to *piano* as she tries to make her voice heard, before fading back. (Fig. 2.6) A marking directs her to sing 'con fatica' (with effort) when she makes her third attempt, her $b\sharp''$ now swelling to a *mezzo forte*, before the choral sound drops away and her voice can finally be clearly heard.

Her tormentors exercise their power over her by forcing her to speak and to sing, denying her the protective silence of the interrogated prisoner, or alternatively they threaten to remove her voice altogether, forcing her into silence against her will. (Fig. 2.7)

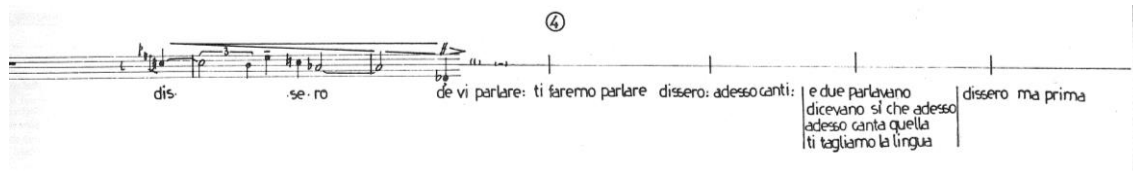


Fig. 2.7

Passaggio frames the voice as a site on which a struggle is played out, political, social or personal, between dehumanising silence and control, and the individual's agency to speak, protest, and be heard. The open voice resounds here as an act of tangible, bodily resistance to efforts to overwhelm and silence it, and as the metaphorical voice of any victim of societal or political 'silencing.'

2) Capitalism, consumerism and culture

Passaggio's creators brought their unapologetically Marxist convictions to bear on the work's structure and 'drama', looking to make the link between Italy's growing culture of consumerism, and what they saw as the danger of reducing all things, including cultural works and opera itself, to the status of saleable commodities. In later years, Berio himself described *Passaggio* as a parody of 'opera's inexorable and self-protective supermarket of the already done, already seen and already heard', seeing opera audiences as complacent consumers of these outmoded cultural goods, while Umberto Eco's introductory essay to the work was scathing in its attack on La Scala's opera-going audience, describing them as

an audience whose members think that buying a ticket entitles them to an entertainment that will 'relax' them and send them home reconciled with

themselves. But this is the kind of audience that a truly modern theatre no longer wants to come to terms with.⁶⁹

Such a focus on Italianate opera, and indeed the singing voice, as the object of intense Marxist critique has its ideological roots in the thought of one of the most important political and intellectual influences for this post-war generation, that of Antonio Gramsci, the founder of the Italian communist party in 1921, who died in prison in 1937 leaving behind him a socialist testament in the form of his *Prison Diaries*, posthumously published in 1948. Left wing intellectuals and artists in the 1950s were familiar with Gramsci's analysis of Italy's social and cultural history, and the important place of language in his political thought. Originally trained as a linguist, Gramsci believed that the lack of a unified national Italian language and the cultural divisions this engendered could be directly linked with the country's political failures, in particular, the rise of Fascism, and of a social order in which an urbanised, literate bourgeoisie maintained an ideological distance and superiority over rural, less educated, linguistically diverse classes of the population. Gramsci's critique included a scathing analysis of one of the pillars of Italian cultural identity, bel canto opera, not simply for its unintelligibility to most of the population of nineteenth century Italy due to its use of a standardised form of Italian, but for what Delia Casadei terms 'the political semiotics of the singing voice'. Gramsci condemned the saccharine, melodramatic plots and libretti of nineteenth century novels and plays, arguing that they perpetuated 'ways of thinking' that sentimentalised and patronised the poor and working classes, and maintained the bourgeois ideology of a hierarchical class system. He held particular condemnation for bel canto opera, arguing that it appropriated the singing voice to communicate and embed a bourgeois ideology in the attention and memory of the working and rural classes, to whom literacy and even a common language was an irrelevance, via the effects of music, melody and vocality. Berio and Maderna would have been very aware of Gramsci's thought - Maderna having paid homage to the Marxist hero by setting one of his prison letters as a Cantata in 1953 - and echoes of his critique of opera and of the voice as a vehicle of bourgeois capitalist ideology can be heard in Berio's own comments, seen above, on opera as a supermarket, and in *Passaggio*'s suggestion of the operatic voice as yet another cheap marketable commodity.⁷⁰

⁶⁹ Luciano Berio, 'Of Sounds and Images', trans. David Osmond-Smith, in *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 9/3 (1997), 297; Eco, 'Work Introduction', accessed 20th May 2015.

⁷⁰ Casadei, 'Milan's Studio di Fonologia', 424-5.

The most explicit condemnation of this consumerist mindset comes in the fourth *Stazione*, in which Lei is offered for auction to a noisy baying crowd. The ‘crowd’, both *Coros A* and *B*, begin by singing numerous different song fragments, each voice directed in the score to choose just one motive from the list Berio suggests, which includes folk songs collected by the Italian musicologist Fausto Amodei, arias from operas by Kurt Weill, Igor Stravinsky and Alban Berg, Leoncavallo, Mascagni, motives from the music of Sibelius, Rachmaninoff and Tchaikovsky, mingled with popular songs of the time such as ‘Arrivaderci Roma’, ‘O Solo Mio’, ‘Volare’, Friedrich Hollaender’s ‘Ich bin von Kopf bis Fuss’, and jazz tunes like ‘Brazil’ or Billie Holiday’s hit ‘Strange Fruit’. The overall effect is of an undifferentiated *mêlée* of what Berio referred to as ‘musical fetishes’, in an echo of Theodor Adorno’s critique of ‘The Culture Industry’s’ reduction of musical works to fetishized, saleable objects, devoid of their original form or aesthetic content.⁷¹ Added to this ‘marketplace’, Lei is then presented for auction; described as ‘Oggetto: una donna, perfettamente domestica’ (object: one woman, perfectly domesticated) she stands in silence as the bidding proceeds, among cries of ‘vogliamo vedere la lingua’, ‘ma cosa fa?’ and ‘quanti anni ha?’ (‘we want to see her tongue’, ‘what does she do?’ and ‘how old is she?’). When the sale is complete, Lei proceeds to the next ‘stazione’ where she ‘crawls on the bed, taking off her coat in the style of a strip tease.’ (Lei è sul letto [...] Si toglie l’impermeabile quasi strisciando e con movenze da striptease). The implication is clear: the opera-house audience, identified with *Coro B*’s salacious bidding, are consumers of opera: they have bought a ticket, they want an entertaining spectacle.

Sanguineti, in later interviews, spoke at length about the concept of ‘the spectacle’ in relation to opera, and of what he and Berio saw as the commodification of the materials of opera, that is, the music, the opera house, but also the body, and the voice, of the singer. The idea of the spectacle was central to the Marxist critique of culture and mass media by Guy Debord in his book *The Society of the Spectacle*.⁷² As a theory, ‘spectacularity’ drew on Marx’s theories of commodity fetishism and reification, and expanded on the work of critical theorists such as György Lukács and T W Adorno in its claims that capitalist society

⁷¹ Stoianova, *Chemins en musique*, 253; T W Adorno ‘On the fetish character in music and the regression of listening’, in *The Culture Industry* (London; New York: Routledge, 1991), 29–60.

⁷² Guy Debord, *The society of the spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (New York: Zone Books, 1994). The book was first published four years after the composition and premiere of *Passaggio*, in 1967. Sanguineti discussed the relevance of Debord’s theory in articulating the modes of radical social critique at work in *Passaggio* and *Laborintus I*, and specifically linking his work to the commodification of the voice in performance, in a 1981 interview with Luigi Pestalozza. See Sanguineti, *Per Musica*, 17.

controls its members through the reification of goods and commodities as objects of aspiration and desire, as much in the production of culture and entertainment as of tangible objects.⁷³ By creating the desire continually to consume these reified commodities, these 'spectacles' of cultural production, the 'society of the spectacle' makes of its members passive, uncritical consumers. In the reckoning of Sanguinetti and Berio, the opera house was as much a marketplace for the commodified spectacle as the cinema, television and radio programming that Debord, Lukács and Adorno decried.

The singing voice was central to this process of commodification; conventional operatic culture had made of it a reified object, traditionally prized for its beauty, its powers of expression and communication, a spectacle to be consumed by a passive listener. In *Passaggio*, the authors wanted to unseat these comfortable assumptions around the voice, and provoke listeners to a more critical perspective.

Perhaps the collective imagination was just beginning to process it, but certainly the intention of *Passaggio* and *Laborintus II* is radical criticism [...] the spectacularity is precisely of the order [...] of listening, and of the spectacle of the voice.⁷⁴

In *Passaggio*, Berio and Sanguinetti wanted to elicit in the audience a critical distance from the spectacle of opera, the work, and the voice, using techniques that self-consciously drew attention to theatrical effects and illusions, such as addressing the audience directly from the stage, placing singers out among the audience in the auditorium, and breaking down the illusory fourth wall between stage and audience that conventional theatre and opera practice tries to create. According to Sanguinetti, these techniques, adapted from the radical political theatre practice of Bertolt Brecht, were intended to provoke an awareness in the audience of the artificiality of the theatrical spectacle, by showing them the 'backstage' workings on which it is based: 'I would say that, after all, the fundamental idea

⁷³ Georg Lukács, *History and class consciousness: studies in Marxist dialectics*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London: Merlin Press, 1971); T W Adorno, *The Culture Industry* (London; New York: Routledge, 1991).

⁷⁴ Forse l'immaginario collettivo cominciava appena a elaborarla, ma l'intenzione certamente di *Passaggio* e di *Laborintus II* è di critica radicale nei confronti di tipo di tendenze allora emergenti. In *A-Ronne*, che in qualche modo può apparire un po' appartato come tipo di esperienza, proprio per la sua stessa natura strutturale, la spettacolarità è di ordine appunto radiofonico, è di ascolto, è lo spettacolo della voce. Sanguinetti, *Per Musica*, 17, trans. author's own.

of theatre and of spectacularity remains for me the Brechtian idea, the idea of a critical distance.⁷⁵

This process of ‘breaking the fourth wall’ and creating an awareness of the processes and materials underpinning the spectacle extend to the operatic voice itself. In the course of the piece, we hear Lei singing with technical accomplishment, but also speaking, whispering and finally shouting and screaming directly at the audience; the alternation of song with the singer’s ‘everyday’ voice has the effect of evoking the reality of the performer’s extra-theatrical, everyday life. Just as Berberian eloquently describes in ‘La Nuove Vocalità’, this is the voice she uses to talk to her loved ones, negotiate with directors and agents, order a taxi, and conduct all of the minutiae of human communication in her daily life. The choruses too, from the outset, slip between different modes of vocal delivery, sometimes singing in full voiced homophony, and sometimes whispering, talking and shouting. Thus the irruption of voices from the ‘real world’ outside the opera house into the customary vocal fabric of opera forms a jarring contrast, thrusting into listeners’ awareness the operatic voice’s artificiality, and the sheer physical technique required of the vocalist to maintain such a sound. In a Brechtian gesture of *Verfremdungseffekt*, the expressive authenticity of operatic utterance is questioned as its ‘backstage’ workings are exposed, that is, the breath, the bodily effort, the stylised and rarified technique demanded of the vocalist. The illusion of a seamless, effortless vocal sound is punctured, in effect breaking the fourth wall of operatic vocality, to address the listener directly in her own, vernacular, everyday voice.

Passaggio offers the voice in multiple guises. The singing voice is at once the reified object of desire on which the ‘spectacle’ of opera rests, and at the same time simply a collection of stylised techniques and conventions. The non-singing voice is presented both as a liberation from these conventions, but also an intrusive and voyeuristic exposure of a someone’s personal, inner life, offered up for the entertainment and amusement of a paying audience. The ambivalence between all of these incarnations is played out in the musical and dramatic construction of *Passaggio*, demonstrating the voice’s essential ‘openness’ to multiple and simultaneous understandings.

⁷⁵ Io direi che, in fondo, l’idea fondamentale del teatro e della spettacolarità rimane per me quella brechtiana, l’idea di una distanza critica. Ibid., 18, trans. author’s own.

Lei's singing voice is introduced at the end of the first Stazione, a pianissimo note, initially inaudible beneath the massed texture of the orchestra and the two Coros, unfolding in Stazione II into a syllabic sung line, involving a series of sometimes vertiginous leaps in the singer's tessitura, calling for a highly developed operatic vocal skill. Ferrari, in his harmonic analysis of the vocal landscape of *Passaggio*, identifies three pitch 'levels' in the vocal line, a low, medium and high level, within each of which a set of independent pitch relations operates; the resulting line, however, alternates between each of the three levels constantly, creating an angular sung line of almost parodic leaps and jumps.⁷⁶ The sense in hearing this vocal introduction is one of pushing an idiom to its limits, challenging and stretching the conventional lyricism of the operatic singer's line until it is a distorted, grotesque parody of itself. The first spoken interjection into this sung line comes as little surprise then, sounding as it does like a natural lapse from an artificial, unsustainable vocal attitude, spoken, fittingly, on the words 'come una liberazione'. (Fig. 2.7)



Fig. 2.7

This sense of being hunted and somehow forced to the limits of vociferation is maintained throughout Stazione II, as Lei's sung line is pursued by the increasingly loud and menacing chants of Coros A and B. Eventually, her singing voice is forced upwards in a series of excruciating steps, from ab'' to ah'' ; ah'' lapses back to ab'' but then up to bb'' . The line falls from the high bb'' to the relief of e' and b' an octave below, before returning to an fh'' , from where the line is inexorably racked up, in what feels like a series of reluctant steps, from fh'' to ah'' , then $g\sharp''$ to $b\sharp''$, $b\sharp''$ finally up to the climactic high ch''' , whereupon the sung note 'breaks down' into speech. (Fig. 2.8) As Lei's line approaches the ch''' , the aggressive chanting of Coros A and B becomes louder and more fervent, until they pause to hear the vocal line's final disintegration. This is not the lyrical soaring line of an accomplished soprano in full operatic song, but the sound of a vocal technique tested to its expressive

⁷⁶ Ferrari, *Les Debuts du theatre musicale d'avant-garde en Italie*, 90-94.

limits, and disintegrating under an inexorable force. The illusory fourth wall of operatic song is here broken repeatedly, as Lei's spoken voice jars the listener's awareness away from the customarily secure vocal musical line, to the fragile physical mechanism that underpins such operatic technique, and the temporal, bodily presence of the performer.

The musical score for Figure 2.8 is divided into two main sections. The left section features a vocal line with lyrics: 'fi: .ne sen-za fi: .ne ar: den: do e mi salverano i pompieri'. Below the vocal line are staves for 'CORO A' (marked with a triangle), 'Mar' (Maracas), 'Vln' (Violins), and 'Xyl' (Xylophone). The right section shows a continuation of the vocal line with lyrics: 'mi salverano i pompieri'. Below this are staves for 'CORO B' (marked with a triangle), 'I les rêves', 'II', 'III', 'IV: senza fine', and 'V'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Fig. 2.8

Stazione III sees a continuation of this process of 'falling' from song into speech, apparently under the pressure of interrogation and onslaught from Coros A and B, as Lei's periods of speech gradually overtake her sung lines. Numerous interjections of speech into Lei's sung line occur, with the sense of a progressive disintegration of her operatic vocal technique, no longer a reliable means of expression or vociferation in the face of the 'outside' forces hurled at the stage. It becomes seemingly more difficult for the sung lines to resume after each instance of being overtaken by speech; Lei's first spoken interjection, on the word 'rami' (branches) is followed by a half sung, pianissimo, halting gesture; the

following sung line fades to triple piano for its duration. (Fig. 2.9) The effort of maintaining the edifice of sung vocal technique becomes more difficult to resume and maintain with each spoken outburst. The fourth wall of operatic voice is continually broken by the direct address of the singer's own, everyday speaking voice.



Fig. 2.9

The breaking down of the voice's conventional operatic techniques exposes it in this sense as a vocal spectacle, an object of passive aural gaze and consumption by a paying audience, mediated through the idiomatic parameters of conventional classical singing. Eco, in his introductory essay for the work's programme, expounds on the rhetorical nature of classical opera in the maintenance of repressive societal and cultural structures, the function of its materials and structures being 'namely, the subjugation of the passive, contemplative stalls to the action taking place on stage [...] In opera, this suggestion of an ordered reality – to be accepted just as it is – works at the level of both the dramatic plot and the musical argument', and also, we find, at the level of the vocal sound on which opera depends.⁷⁷

However, *Passaggio* is by no means univocal in its critique of the operatic voice. While Lei's classical delivery can be heard in terms of a culturally sanctioned object of audience consumption, the 'liberation' that presumably is offered by a more vernacular, personal mode of utterance seems uncertain. Through Stazione II and III, Lei's sung line continually falters into speech under what feels like a process of interrogation, indicating to the listener through a progressive erosion of Lei's sung delivery the destruction of her operatic idiom, and the eventual exposure of her 'real' voice in speech, sobbing and shouts. It feels

⁷⁷ Il rapporto di soggezione che unisce la platea passiva e contemplatrice alla vicenda che si svolge sulla scena [...] Nel melodramma questa suggestione di una realtà ordinata, da accettare così com'è, si realizza a due livelli, quello della vicenda drammatica e quello del discorso musicale. Umberto Eco, 'Introduzione a *'Passaggio'* (1963)', in *Berio*, ed. Enzo Restagno (Torino: EDT, 1995), 67.

like a highly aggressive progression, forcing Lei from the protective structures of trained vocal technique to an exposure of her own, everyday extra-theatrical speaking voice, and further, into audibly emotional terrain of sobs, shouts and screams. As she is 'forced' into speech, there is a sense of violation, of a voyeuristic invasion of personal privacy and intimacy, mirrored in Lei's physical 'striptease' for the entertainment and gratification of a watching, and listening crowd.

These spoken interjections continue throughout Stazione III, until Lei's final fall to speech from song on the word 'adesso', and then her subsequent silence to the end of the scene. When Lei's vociferation resumes in Stazione IV, it is a stream of rapidly alternating speech and song, the sung fragments being quotations from Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*, a classical Latin poem that decries the hypocrisy and oppression of the Roman ruling classes, while the spoken words tell of the prisoner's terror and surrender to her captors on prison, spoken in Italian. The effect is of a frantic struggle between speech and song, as though the more Lei tries to address the listener with a direct spoken, vernacular account of her own experience, the more her voice is dragged back to an operatic technique, forming words of a formal, idealised and largely dead language. The effect is reminiscent of the dancer in the folk tale of the red shoes, immortalised by Moira Shearer in Powell and Pressburger's highly expressionist 1948 film, in which the female protagonist dons the eponymous magical dancing shoes that she so desires, only to be overpowered by them and compelled to dance herself to exhaustion and death.⁷⁸ The same violent ambivalence, between the object of conventional operatic vocal beauty and desire, and the reclamation of her own, extra-theatrical voice, can be heard playing out between Lei's modes of vocal utterance. Her sung phrases are frantic, angular and leaping, the line jerkily pulled about marionette-like as the voice reluctantly performs its technical functions, even while it struggles to break free of them and lapse into intelligible, communicative speech. This oscillation between conventional song and spoken words draws the listener's awareness to the sheer artificiality of the operatic technique, the constant spoken interjections confronting him with the physical, everyday reality of the body and voice of the woman he is watching and hearing.

⁷⁸ Michael Powell, Emeric Pressburger, dirs., *The Red Shoes* [DVD] (ITV Studios Home Entertainment, 2009).

By the final Stazione, speech has almost entirely overtaken song in Lei's delivery. As she reviews her memories of the various stations and events she has passed through, she addresses the audience directly in an agitated spoken monologue, with occasional interruptions of song before resuming her account. To underline this exposure of the artificial techniques and structures of operatic song and production, Lei's speech is accompanied by a voice from Coro B calling from the auditorium marked in the score as 'a piena voce, come un regista' (in full voice, like a director), with instructions such as 'silenzio effetto, in silenzio', 'piu forte!', 'a destra! ...al centro! ...a destra!' ('silence please, in silence', 'louder!', 'to the right! ...centre! ...to the right!') (Fig. 2.10) Once again the fourth wall of theatrical illusion is disrupted and destroyed, alongside the disintegration of the illusory vocality of traditional operatic practice.

The figure displays a musical score for a scene. At the top, a line of text contains lyrics: '[devi firmare, diceva quello piccolo: e lei diceva: non so niente; non ti cosa niente: ho detto: non so, non so, non so] si porta sul luogo della STAZIONE? c'è una stanza'. Below this, the score is divided into two main sections. The first section, marked with a circled 5, shows vocal staves for Soprano (S.), Tenore (Tr.), and Contraltina (C.A.), along with piano accompaniment for Violini (Vl.), Violoncelli (Vc.), and Contrabbasso (C.B.). The second section, marked with a circled 7, features a large, stylized graphic of a speaker or microphone on the left, with the text 'a destra!' and 'al centro!' above it. Below this graphic, the text 'haec sordent—nobis silentibus vel clamantibus—praesentibus—' is written. The score also includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like *mf* and *f*.

Fig. 2.10

The voice, then, is displayed in a variety of attitudes, in order to highlight the process of commodification that occurs around it through what Berio and Sanguineti felt to be the mindless consumption of an archaic operatic spectacle. Depending on the listener's choice of perspective, it is the reified 'object-voice' of traditional opera, resonating within the walls of La Scala with the memories of all the operatic voices that have been heard there over the centuries, of all the heroines and characters' stories that have moved and

entertained opera house audiences; or it is the voice of a woman, a person with an offstage life beyond the theatre, invoking the voices and experiences of countless ordinary people in the world who suffer persecution or injustice. The use of the voice's inherent openness to hearing and understanding reflects the consciously 'open', multilayered complexity of *Passaggio*'s construction.

3) Religion, society and power

As well as taking unapologetic aim at a consumerist society, *Passaggio* plays heavily on themes of religious faith and practice, and the role these play in both the maintenance of repressive social structures, but also in suggesting a moral dimension to political and human relations. The open voice here oscillates between a number of planes, physical, metaphorical, referential, that variously invoke or reject the religious imagery and associations that occur in *Passaggio*.

References to religious texts and practices abound in *Passaggio*; the work's subtitle for example, 'Messa in Scena' is, according to Sanguineti, an explicit pun that plays with the phrase's double meaning, either the Italian for the French phrase 'mise en scene' meaning staging or to put on stage, or the Italian for a 'mass on stage'.⁷⁹ This intertwining of imagery of the opera house and the Catholic church is found frequently throughout the piece, and is echoed in its creators' discussions of the quasi-religious adherence of its audience, or congregation, to the traditional imagery, practices and rituals of opera. Each 'stazione' has a subtitle of a Latin phrase, which are drawn variously from Catholic mass liturgy, old testament psalms, and from the New Testament gospel of Matthew. The first stage is subtitled 'Introitus' which refers to the opening chant of a mass or Eucharistic service in many Christian churches. Various Latin quotations that appear in the texts spoken by Coro B are taken from *De Rerum Natura*, the work of the 1st century BC Roman poet and philosopher Lucretius, and describe the hypocritical devotion of rich roman citizens to their religion and their gods.⁸⁰ Ivanka Stoianova in her survey of the textual allusions within *Passaggio*, takes these references to religious practice to be Berio and Sanguineti's

⁷⁹ Edoardo Sanguineti, *Conversazione Musicale*, Ed. Roberto Iovino (Genova: il melangolo, 2011), 44.

⁸⁰ Titus Lucretius Carus, *De rerum natura. Book III*, ed. E.J. Kenney (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

critique of the role of religion and consumerism in society; just as the Romans offer human sacrifices to appease their gods, so does contemporary society sacrifice human freedom to the religion of capitalist commodification and consumption.⁸¹

While many of these subtle religious allusions may not be obvious to the listener in the audience, the form of the piece as a series of 'stations', a palpable reference to the Christian 'via crucis', was highlighted by the staging and set design of the piece, as well as outlined with a diagram in the original programme. Lei's progression through six Stazione echoes the 'stations of the cross', a cycle of Lenten prayers and readings in which Roman Catholics meditate on the physical stages of Christ's arrest, interrogation, torture and execution, drawing a parallel between the ordeal and suffering of Lei and that of Jesus. David Osmond-Smith refers in passing to these religious references as 'an oblique snub to Catholicism'; however, the abundance of references and resonances between liturgical and operatic practices in *Passaggio* suggests a more complex, ambivalent relationship with the practice of religious faith. *Passaggio*'s creators drew links frequently between the idea of 'empty' religious practice, and opera house audiences' passive consumption of the operatic spectacle and the voice as a commodity of entertainment. The opera audience, Eco wrote in the introductory essay to *Passaggio*, reduces their experience of the voices onstage to a discussion of 'the vocal power of the tenor, or the grace of the soprano', while the 'practice' of opera had become 'a rite. A liturgy without faith. With its altar desecrated and its audience of atheists.'⁸²

Berio too explicitly linked what he saw as a redundant operatic culture with a corrupted religious faith when he wrote in a note to Sanguineti the words 'Introibo ad altare putridae scalae', meaning approximately 'let us go to the corrupt altar of La Scala', a dry rewording of the opening lines of the Latin mass 'introibo ad altare Dei' or 'let us go to the altar of God'.⁸³

In his introductory essay, Eco calls on the audience to make a choice, both 'aesthetic and moral'. Their choice is to identify with the Coro B among the audience, the consumers of operatic 'commodities', unwilling to challenge or question their place in the social order; or to identify with Lei, the nameless individual, victim of imprisonment and injustice when she tries to make her dissenting voice heard above a hostile crowd. Their challenge,

⁸¹ Stoianova, *Chemins en Musique*, 257.

⁸² Un rito. Una liturgia senza fede. Col suo altare dissacrato e il suo pubblico di atei. Eco, *Berio*, 68.

⁸³ Berio made this dedication to his friend in the pages of a *Missale Romanum* from 1961. cit. in Brüderman, *Das Musiktheater von Luciano Berio*, 57.

according to Eco, is to choose, within the framework of this ‘open work’, which path of understanding and identification they will choose. In this sense then, the identification of Lei’s experiences with the passion and death of the New Testament Jesus underlines this choice as not simply a theatrical exercise, but as having a deeply moral, political, and even spiritual dimension. The voice’s direct performativity, its resounding physical presence in the auditorium enacts this choice: depending on what and how the audience chooses to hear, it is a disintegrating travesty of the smooth, technically secure operatic voice central to their experience of opera; or it is a sonic and vocal enactment of the trials and ordeals of Lei’s ‘passione profana’.⁸⁴

The voice most obviously suggests a parallel with the stages of the passion in the *Stazione III*, in which the singing voice ‘falls’ frequently into speech and silence under the onslaught of the massed choral and orchestral textures. The *stazione*’s opening bars find the solo voice singing out over relatively sparse orchestration, the subdued setting making audible Lei’s story, or perhaps her own memory, of a traumatic attack on a young girl in a garden. The text is mostly sung with few spoken interjections, with wide leaps of up to a 9th and 10th characterising this lyrical line. As her account proceeds, the orchestration thickens, and is joined by the Coro A’s eight part homophonic singing, beginning *pianissimo* but with a gradual crescendo to *fortissimo*; meanwhile Coro B begins their barracking ‘interrogation’, their shouted aggression directed at the onstage soloist, until a crescendo is reached between all of the massed voices, Coro A’s lines now marked *fff* and ‘gridando’ (shouted). (Fig. 2.11)

⁸⁴ Eco, *Berio*, 70.

⑦ *p* $3/8 = 144$ $4/8$ *rall* $4/4$
 l'er- ba
 (gritando)
 va- no oh co-mech-co-me mi la-cerava-no le os-sa
 va- no mi la-cerava-no le ossa oh co-me mi la-ce-ra-va-no
 va- no oh co-mech-co-me mi la-cerava-no le os-sa
 va- no mi la-cerava-no le ossa oh co-me mi la-ce-ra-va-no
 ⑧
 ⑦ $3/8 = 144$ $4/8$ *rall* $4/4$
 Sn. dr. hh Ly. borg. Tromb. wbl. TT. Almgl. cenc. Glock. Gr. hh
 oh in questo vuoto
 schmerzt es dich?
 dove? oh
 oh
 ⑦ $3/8 = 144$ *rall* $4/4$
 oh where are you born? spezzate le sue ossa

Fig. 2.11

Up to this point Lei's sung lines have been heard to falter occasionally and stumble into speech, as though the intense antagonism she faces makes her virtuosic singing harder and harder to maintain; the sound of her speech has the quality of 'breaking down' under interrogation. At the point of orchestral and choral crescendo, her voice becomes inaudible, drowned out by the intense vocal onslaught. The push and pull of dynamics between the soloist's single voice and the mass of interrogators continues as she tries to rally against her tormentors: while her spoken interjections become longer and more desperate, she still returns with emphatic sung efforts such as the fortissimo piercing high

B \sharp which lasts only one bar, the impression created of someone struggling to stand up and resist who is repeatedly beaten and knocked down. (Fig. 2.12)

The musical score for Fig. 2.12 is a complex arrangement featuring multiple staves. The top section includes an Oboe (Ott.) part and a Trombone (Tr.) part, both with first and second endings. The bottom section features vocal parts with lyrics in Italian. The score is marked with various tempo and dynamics, including $\text{♩} = 144$, $\text{♩} = 166$, and $\text{♩} = 72$. The lyrics are: "e già notte oh", "va. -no", "oh co-me mi bru-cia- -va-no le os- -sa", "oh co-me mi bru-cia-no le os- -sa", "ebolli va pecceson- -gue", "ebolli va pecceson- -gue", "ebolli va oh", "ebolli va oh".

Fig. 2.12

Echoing Jesus' falls, for a first, second and third time, each a separate station on the 'via crucis', Lei's 'fall' into speech occurs a third time in the following measures. Coro A and B's onslaught is interrupted by a bar's rest, as if to stand back and observe their prisoner's defeat, as Lei's speaking voice rings out through the momentary silence. This is followed

by a longer spoken statement, though inaudible now as Coro A and B resume their frantic aggressive shouting. Lei's last attempt at song has the sense of a weakened final effort, as the sung line, now marked piano, traces a series of plangent falls from its initial $b\flat''$ to its closing $f\sharp''$, $e\flat''$, $e\flat''$, d'' gesture, before falling finally into speech for one measure, and then silence for the remainder of the Stazione. (Fig. 2.13)

The musical score for Figure 2.13 is divided into two systems. The top system features a vocal line for Lei, with lyrics: "non posso non posso dar-mi-re così oh non lasciarmi adesso". The tempo and meter markings above the staff are 3/8 (♩=104), 4/4 (♩=92), 3/4 (♩=72), and 4/4. Below the vocal line are staves for Coro A and Coro B, both marked "sen." (senza). The bottom system shows the instrumental ensemble, including Snare (Sn), Timpani (Tim), Snare (Sn), Flute (Fl), and Snare (Sn). The lyrics "kein ende kein ende kein ende kein" are written below the instrumental staves. The tempo and meter markings for the instrumental parts are 3/4 and 4/4. The score is marked with measures 15 and 16.

Fig. 2.13

Lei's silence is overrun by the sinister rhythmic shouts and chanting of Coros A and B, their growing crescendo mixed with steady pounding in the percussion and low rumbling brass creating a sense of martial triumph at the final 'breaking' and silencing of Lei's single voice.

Conclusion

Passaggio, then, as Berio's first 'music drama' or quasi-operatic work, stages all of the explosive anger and energy of a group of young artists, restless and anxious to overturn what they saw as outdated, outmoded and politically redundant musical and theatrical forms. In channelling the *neoavanguardia* spirit of radical reinvention, the work's creators embraced the inclusive and challenging aesthetic of 'openness' in art, composing an 'open work' to incarnate the ambivalence and complexity of the themes and issues they explored, and also to challenge and provoke listeners to engage actively and critically with what they saw and heard in the world around them. At the heart of this openness lies the human voice; the composition stages it in its complexity and multivalency, open to the myriad different hearings and understandings that the voice can incarnate. The physical, resonating vocal performativity that makes opera such a powerfully affecting medium is here harnessed to the cause of political, social and aesthetic critique, by challenging the audience to question, and to choose, *what* and *how* they hear, when they hear a human voice. Here, the open voice is amply demonstrated, not simply its inherent multivalency, but how this openness is deliberately staged to serve the work's own multi-layered aesthetic and political concerns.

While the spirit of political outrage and iconoclasm that infuses *Passaggio* may have abated over the following years of Berio's compositional career, his works continued to display a self-conscious aesthetic openness of form, his vocal works framing and interrogating the human voice's multiple capacities and meanings. Chapter 3 will explore in greater detail the nature of the relationship between the open voice and the listener, as it is made a subject of contemplation and scrutiny, in his later work *Un Re in Ascolto* (1983)

Chapter 3

‘Only the desire to hear opens the ear’: listening, encounter, and the open voice in *Un re in ascolto* (1983)

Twenty years after *Passaggio*’s raucous premiere, in collaboration with the renowned Italian novelist and writer Italo Calvino, Berio composed his arguably most ‘conventional’ theatre work to date, *Un re in ascolto* (A King Listens), a full scale opera, with numbers, arias, concertati, an orchestra in the pit and traditional operatic singing onstage, produced for the stages and audiences of the large opera houses of the world. Following its premiere in the Kleines Festspielhaus in Salzburg in 1984, the work went on to be performed in the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, the Staatsoper in Wien, Opéra and Teatro alla Scala, Milan, with transfers of the Covent Garden production to major opera companies in the United States and Europe such as the Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Opéra de Paris. New productions in the intervening years since its premiere have been mounted in Lucerne, Geneva, Frankfurt, with its most recent performances in 2015 produced by the Staatstheater in Kassel.¹ The work has proved to be one of Berio’s ‘most resilient

¹ ‘Performances: Un re in ascolto’ in *Universal Editions* [website], <<http://www.universaledition.com/performances-and-calendar#composer=54>> accessed 25th September 2016.

contribution to the contemporary operatic repertory' in its continued popularity and appeal to opera-goers internationally.²

A seeming volte face, then, for the *enfants terribles* of the Italian neo-avant garde, whose calls in the 1960s to provoke, upset and destroy the bourgeois complacency of opera house audiences here seem to be replaced with a more circumspect production rooted firmly in the structures and traditions of grand opera. From their howls in the 'alternative' Piccolo Scala performance space to destroy the opera house and its adherents, to what Massimo Mila calls 'a true opera [...] a genuine opera [...] where] the flow of the melody, that element to which musicologists pay so little attention, is governed by the laws of the voice', performed on the hallowed main stage of La Scala, is a journey of just a few hundred metres, but two decade's worth of musical questioning and introspection.³ While at first glance, there might seem to be few points of similarity between the early experimentalism of works such as *Allez-Hop* (1959) and *Passaggio* (1963), what links these compositions firmly with his later works for the stage is his close collaboration with a small group of writers, including Umberto Eco and Italo Calvino, who themselves have become two of the most important literary figures of the last half-century, and their shared sensibility of dissection and critique of hallowed forms of artistic reception, be that literary, musical or operatic.⁴ Eco, in discussing the work with Berio in an interview in 1984, suggested that *Un re in ascolto* signals not a return to the operatic fold of outmoded conventions and genres, but an attempt to renew them from within, having failed to provoke and destroy them from 'without':

Proscenium, scenery, costumed characters who sing, all this arouses expectations of opera. It's a point that the second historical avant-garde, that of the 1960s, dealt with by saying that it was precisely their intention to frustrate the genre-based expectations of a philistine bourgeois public [...] But something has happened in the meantime. The historical avant-garde has exhausted its provocative impetus, not through any fault of its own, but because the public immunized itself by going to the theatre to absorb ever larger doses of provocation. So that the only way to

² David Osmond-Smith and Ben Earle, 'Luciano Berio', *Grove Music Online* [online resource] <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/02815?q=un+re+in+ascolto&search=quick&pos=4&start=1#firsthit>>, Updated 3rd September 2014, Accessed 25th September 2016.

³ Massimo Mila, 'Un re in ascolto: A true opera', trans. David Osmond-Smith, in programme for Royal Opera House performance of *Un re in ascolto*, (London, 1989).

⁴ David Fearn, *Italian Opera Since 1945* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 175.

provoke it was not to provoke it any more. The genres were reborn, though now seen through ironic and critical eyes.⁵

True to this spirit of irony and critique, *Un re in ascolto* is in effect a meta-opera, an opera about opera, in which the unflinching dissection and questioning of the structures and processes of operatic production creates the central musical and dramatic momentum of the work. The large scale work in two acts, running at about an hour and a half in length, tells the story of Prospero, an opera house impresario, who is attempting to produce an opera. On the face of it, the narrative appears to follow his attempts to audition singers, negotiate with his stage manager and decide on the tone and events of the final production; early in the first half he has a premonition of his own death, and in the second half he weakens and finally dies, to a chorus of farewells from his singers and theatre staff; ultimately the 'opera within an opera' remains un-made, and Prospero's vision unrealised. Such a 'narrative' however is at best a suggested, fragmentary outline, as the characters and events onstage take on a dream-like, often disconnected and incongruous quality, borne of a libretto constructed of a vast array of overlaid texts, references and allusions which self-consciously rejects any sense of an easily recognisable linear plot.

In this fragmentary construction, *Un re in ascolto* retains the quintessential 'openness' and mobility of form developed in theory by Umberto Eco in his early essays such as 'The poetics of the open work' from 1957, and played out Berio's early compositional works, from *Sequenza I* for flute (1958) to *Allez-Hop* to *Passaggio*. In the years between the first Italian publication of *The Open Work* (1962) and the collaborative development of *Un re in ascolto* in the early 1980s, Eco expanded and developed his semiotic theories of open works of art, paying greater attention to what he termed 'the role of the reader' in the context of literary works, or any receiver of an 'open' artwork, whether dramatic, musical or visual. In an article published in 1981, Eco loosely traces three stages in the developments of semiotic theory through the 1960s and 70s; firstly, a stage in which semiotics was concerned with signs and their differences, devised from the theoretical legacy of Pierre Saussure; secondly in the 1970s a shift from the study of signs to the 'recognition and generation of texts' before, thirdly, a shift from theories of texts to 'pragmatics', that is, from the generation of texts, to their reading. Here Eco specifies that

⁵ Luciano Berio, 'Eco listens: Umberto Eco interviews Luciano Berio', trans. David Osmond-Smith, in programme for Royal Opera House performance of *Un re in ascolto*, (London, 1989).

Reading, however, no longer refers to problems of critical interpretation or more or less refined hermeneutics; rather, it is concerned with the more formidable question of the recognition of the reader's response as a possibility built into the textual strategy.⁶

This emphasis on the reactions and perceptions of the receiver of the artwork echoes strongly the literary criticism of Roland Barthes, whose 1967 essay 'The death of the author' similarly expands on this fundamental idea: that, contrary to the focus of conventional literary and artistic criticism, it is the receiver, listener, reader of a work, rather than its author, through whom the work finds its completion and understanding:

A text is made of multiple writings, drawn from many cultures and entering into mutual relations of dialogue, parody, contestation, but there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader, not, as was hitherto said, the author [...] a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination.⁷

Eco's theoretical and aesthetic concern with the interaction of the reader, or in the case of opera, the listener, was shared by fellow *neoavanguardia* writer Italo Calvino; inspired by reading Roland Barthes' article 'Listening' in the late 1970s, he brought the essay to Berio's attention as the potential subject for an opera.⁸ *Un re in ascolto* was born out of the two men's desire to create an opera that would explore 'listening in all its forms' in a musical dramatic context, its libretto and action based on the different modes of listening reception Barthes' essay outlined. In creating a work of opera that could dissect and interrogate the structures and processes of the operatic form, Berio and Calvino shone the spotlight on the most fundamental process of any musical work, that of listening, and of listeners' own unique reactions to the array of stimuli presented to them. The very title of the opera lays out this primary concern: A King Listens. But in an opera house, what does he listen to?

Given opera's basis in the sound of the singing voice for its realisation, the staging of 'listening in all its forms' in *Un re in ascolto* presents an exploration of this listening's corollary, that is, the sounding human voice. Taking a central place in the work, the driving impetus of the plot, such as there is, is Prospero's search for an ideal voice for his opera

⁶ Umberto Eco, 'The Theory of Signs and the Role of the Reader', *The Bulletin of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, 14/1 (1981), 35.

⁷ Roland Barthes, 'The death of the author', in *Image music text*, trans. Stephen Heath (London: Fontana Press, 1977), 148.

⁸ Roland Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985).

production. In his duet with his stage manager, drawn from the real-life correspondence between Calvino and Berio on the opera's proposed libretto, the stage manager explains that the purpose to Prospero's listening is that he is 'looking for a woman's voice singing an aria, in a setting that is like a labyrinth'.⁹ Prospero himself qualifies this explanation in the opening aria when he tells his listeners that it is not any voice he seeks, but the voice he heard in a dream, of 'an I whom I do not know, [that] sings [...] the music that I do not remember, that I would now [...] like to sing.'¹⁰ From the outset then, questions around what and how Prospero listens and hears are inextricably bound up with the voices around him, the voices of singers, actors and theatre staff, his own inner voice and the voice he hears in dreams, the 'silent' voice of the mime and the intrusive, violent voices of the 'outside' extra-theatrical world which burst into his theatre in the form of a terrorist attack, and later the voices of a doctor, a nurse and a lawyer. The multi-layered narrative and musical construction of the work, that creates such a shimmering ambiguous mobility between meanings and associations, presents the voice as the object of our listening. Just as the opera explores 'listening in all its forms', it in turn displays the human voice in an array of attitudes, depending on the perception, reaction and understanding of the listener.¹¹ The opera forms a prism through which we can clearly see the 'open voice', diffracted into a vast array of roles, functions, meanings and critical readings, sometimes simultaneous, paradoxical and even contradictory, embodying the semiotic multivalency and mobility of Eco's 'open work' on the operatic stage.

This is not to suggest that the voice as presented in *Un re in ascolto* becomes simply a site of sonic material to which a listener can attach any meaning whatsoever; rather, the aesthetic and thematic demands of the piece form a framework which invoke certain types of 'openness' of the voice. As discussed in the previous chapter in relation to *Passaggio's* characteristics as an 'opera aperta', here again, *Un re in ascolto* deliberately presents the voice's 'openness' to the listener's understanding and construction as central to the musical and thematic workings of the piece. In outlining his theory of the 'open work', Eco could have been describing the voice's 'openness' within the parameters of a specific aesthetic context.

⁹ E tu cercavi una voce di donna che canta un'aria / su una scena come una labirinto. *Un re in ascolto* *Azione Musicale in due parte* (1983) Partitura (Vienna; London: Universal Editions, 1984), 83.

¹⁰ Un io che non conosco canta, canta, canta, canta / Canta la musica che non ricordo e che io adesso, adesso, / Adesso vorrei cantare. *Un re in ascolto*, 8.

¹¹ Io vorrei che questo teatro potesse contenere l'ascolto / in tutte sue forme. Ibid. 84-5.

The common factor is a mutability which is always deployed within the specific limits of a given taste, or of predetermined formal tendencies, and is authorized by the concrete pliability of the material offered [...] All these examples of open' works and 'works in movement' have this latent characteristic, which guarantees that they will always be seen as 'works' and not just as a conglomeration of random components ready to emerge from the chaos in which they previously stood and permitted to assume any form whatsoever.¹²

While *Passaggio* framed the voice's 'openness' to the countless expressive, communicative, emotional, practical, passionate and mundane functions it serves in the course of the lived human experience, invoking on stage for political and ethical emphasis the profound humanity of each individual in the ordinariness of their daily life, here *Un re in ascolto* adopts the voice's 'openness' or 'mutability' to explore and expose the power-play in the encounter between two individual subjects, in which one vocalises and one listens. Drawing on Roland Barthes' psychoanalytically based analysis of the listening encounter between two people, the opera uses the analogy of an opera house to stage the dynamics of this intersubjective event. In the same Brechtian strategy that places the work's action backstage in a fictional opera house, we see exposed the voice's 'backstage' workings, the operatic vocal technique for instance, or the diegetic and narrative setting, or the relative subject positions of the vocalist and listener which in turn forms the structures of power between individuals in which the voice resonates. The voice's 'openness' is deployed to show each layer of its 'behind the scenes' construction, systematically stripped away one by one as this chapter's analysis will show; to ask what, ultimately, are we listening to, and what do we hear, when we hear another's voice?

Scholarship on *Un re in ascolto* and the question of voice

While the complex relationship between voice and listening is crucial to the aesthetic and thematic concerns of *Un re in ascolto*, musicological commentary on Berio's *azione musicale* has paid little attention to the role or presence of the voice over the years since its first performance. Articles from around the time of the work's British premiere in 1989

¹² Eco, *The Open Work*, 19.

focus largely on descriptive elements of the work such as plot, musical structure and literary references. David Belinfante's review in the *Musical Times* outlines the piece's *mise en scene* and highlights 'the accessibility of the work as a whole, an accessibility which is due mainly to the incorporation of memorable melodic ideas, and recurring themes and harmonic patterns,' while German academic and critic Mathias Theodor Vogt offered a fascinating and painstaking survey of the literary references in the work's libretto in the *Cambridge Opera Journal*.¹³ Over a decade later, Arman Schwartz too delved into the 'complex web of sources [...] themselves intricately interrelated through games of citation and revision' that form the work's libretto, and presented an extensive and thoughtful survey of the work in which he considered the critical implications of Berio's contemplation of various types of listening in an operatic context.¹⁴ Only as recently as 2013 has greater critical interest been paid to what could arguably be seen as the metaphysics and aesthetics of operatic listening and performance as portrayed in *Un re in ascolto*, in a series of papers emerging from a study day dedicated specifically to this one opera.¹⁵ The papers included analytical and biographical surveys of *Un re in ascolto*'s genesis and construction; some such as Carlo Ciceri's shedding light on the compositional methods and structures which underpin the work's musical coherence, while others such as Tommaso Pomilio's article explored in depth the libretto's genesis over the course of Calvino and Berio's long and often difficult collaborative relationship.¹⁶ In contrast, more circumspect and critical analyses of the work's themes and aesthetic assertions came from

¹³ David Belinfante, 'Luciano Berio's "Un re in ascolto"', *The Musical Times*, 130/1752 (1989), 71; Matthias Theodor Vogt, 'Listening as a Letter of Uriah. A note on Berio's "Un re in ascolto" (1984) on the occasion of the opera's first performance in London (9 February 1989)', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 2/2 (1990), 173-185.

¹⁴ Arman Schwartz, 'Prospero's isle and the sirens' rock', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 15/1 (2003), 83-106.

¹⁵ This study day was part of a larger project on *Le théâtre musicale de Luciano Berio*, which conducted an in-depth study over time of the composer's theatrical works, his aesthetics and creative process. Six study days took place between 2010 and 2013, arranged in a collaboration between the D.M.C.E. (Dramaturgie Musicale Contemporaine en Europe) of the University of Paris VIII, Centro Studi Luciano Berio and the Fondazione Giorgio Cini of Venice. See 'Luciano Berio's musical theatre', in *Centro Studi Luciano Berio* [Website] <<http://www.lucianoberio.org/node/2666?517844511=1>>, accessed 10th October, 2016.

¹⁶ Carlo Ciceri, 'Aspetti del pensiero melodico in *Un re in ascolto*', in *Dramaturgie Musicale Contemporaine en Europe* [online resource] http://www2.univ-paris8.fr/DMCE/page.php?page=9#Un_re_2 accessed 1st July, 2013, 1-37; also in Giordano Ferrari, ed. *Le théâtre musical de Luciano Berio II: De Un re in ascolto à Un cronaca del luogo* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2016), 79-116; Tommaso Pomilio, 'Scrittura dell'ascolto: Calvino in Berio', in *Dramaturgie Musicale Contemporaine en Europe* [online resource], http://www2.univ-paris8.fr/DMCE/page.php?page=9#Un_re_2 accessed 1st July, 2013, 1-17; also in Giordano Ferrari, ed. *Le théâtre musical de Luciano Berio II: De Un re in ascolto à Un cronaca del luogo* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2016), 117-144.

Björn Heile's and Robert Adlington's articles, that reflect on the work's fundamental ambivalence around the representational and expressive forms of operatic tradition.¹⁷

Adlington's paper focusses on the 'disintegrative principle' of auditory experience, the dissolution of firm subject boundaries, that comes about through listening, citing literary theorist Steven Connor's description of sonorous experience as 'a threat to selfhood'. Sound, Adlington writes,

refuses to respect the spatial boundaries by means of which we establish our separateness as subjects from our surroundings...[and] works to undo the construction of a 'distance, differentiation and domination' that, for Connor, form the basis of the modern notion of autonomous selfhood.¹⁸

Adlington's paper follows the critical thread 'in continental philosophy which has critiqued the 'ocularcentrism' of Western thought', and links this recent critical shift with *Un re in ascolto*'s own exploration of the intersubjective boundaries and spaces opened up through auditory experience.¹⁹ Drawing on French philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy's significant work on the phenomenology of listening, the paper highlights the disputed and ambivalent subject positions between the opera's characters, and the role of sound and listening in dissolving seemingly fixed relations of power and authority. From their positions of critical reflection on the intersections of listening, text and subjectivity in *Un re in ascolto*, papers such as Adlington's and Heile's point the way towards a critical appraisal of the central, and yet largely overlooked, musical material of the opera, the sounding voice. Jean-Luc Nancy, in his discussion of the phenomenological effects of listening on an individual's sense of discrete selfhood, links an experience of the 'disintegrative principle' specifically with the hearing of a voice. He writes

The subject of the listening [...] is perhaps no subject at all, except as the place of resonance, of its infinite tension and rebound, the amplitude of sonorous

¹⁷ Björn Heile, 'Prospero's Death: Modernism, Anti-humanism and *Un re in ascolto*', in *Dramaturgie Musicale Contemporaine en Europe* [online resource] http://www2.univ-paris8.fr/DMCE/page.php?page=9#Un_re_2 accessed 1st July, 2013, 1-13; also in Giordano Ferrari, ed. *Le théâtre musical de Luciano Berio II: De Un re in ascolto à Un cronaca del luogo* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2016), 145-160; Robert Adlington, 'The crises of sense': listening to *Un re in ascolto*', in *Dramaturgie Musicale Contemporaine en Europe* [online resource], http://www2.univ-paris8.fr/DMCE/page.php?page=9#Un_re_2 accessed 1st July, 2013, 1-20; also in Giordano Ferrari, ed. *Le théâtre musical de Luciano Berio II: De Un re in ascolto à Un cronaca del luogo* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2016), 53-78.

¹⁸ Adlington, 'The crises of sense', 1.

¹⁹ Ibid., 2.

deployment, and the slightness of its simultaneous redeployment - by which a voice is modulated, in which the singular of a cry, a call, or a song vibrates.²⁰

The importance of the sonorous, resonating voice to any contemplation of listening in opera and music theatre may, by definition, seem so blindingly – or deafeningly – self-evident as to remain largely unremarked in musicological commentary. In fact, it is from a literary direction, rather from purely musical or musicological ones, that the keenest observation of the voice's centrality to the listening encounters depicted in *Un re in ascolto* comes, in the form of Italo Calvino's own short story of the same title. In an echo of Edoardo Sanguineti's specific preoccupation with the poetics of the bodily, sounding voice in *Passaggio* and other works of music theatre, here it is the novelist and librettist Calvino who places the multifaceted, resonant, 'open' human voice at the very centre of his mediation on the act of listening. Calvino's short story *Un re in ascolto*, written in response to the same essay by Roland Barthes on which the opera is based, and published in the same week as the opera's premiere in 1984, describes the king's search for a voice, but specifically a voice that resonates with myriad potential meanings and implications, a voice defined by its essential 'openness' to a listener's hearing and unique understanding.

What attracts you is not only a memory or a fantasy, but the throbbing of a throat of flesh. A voice means this: there is a living person, throat, chest, feelings, who sends into the air this voice, different from all other voices. A voice involves the throat, saliva, infancy, the patina of experienced life, the mind's intentions, the pleasure of giving a personal form to sound waves.²¹

Calvino here articulates the voice's multiple forms and values beyond the semantic or linguistic text it might bear, containing implications of a person's own unique life and experience, the sounding voice heard for instance as a residue of the cry of her infant self, sparking off the associative and inferential links with this individual's experiences of childhood, of crying, of emotion, of the thoughts a person might have in those moments, their memories or hopes, reminiscent of the listener's own childhood memories, and so on in a vast, potentially infinite web of powerful evocations and associations with which the human voice resonates.

²⁰ Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*, trans. Charlotte Mandell, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 21-2.

²¹ Italo Calvino, 'A king listens', in *Under the jaguar sun*, trans. William Weaver (London: Penguin Classics, 2009), 54.

Calvino articulates the complex and indivisible relationship between listening and the sound of the voice; in posing the question of *how* the king listens, Calvino specifically links it to question of what voice the king hears. Through its deft and complex staging of these different forms of listening, *Un re in ascolto* presents the voice in a reciprocal attitude of multivalency and openness, as an intersubjective space in which meanings are not fixed and static, but rather disperse and reform continually in the transaction between vocalist and listener.

In its overarching concern with ‘listening’ in an operatic context, *Un re in ascolto* frames not just a unilateral apperception of aural stimuli, but creates a multidimensional exploration of the listening encounter, and the complex interactions between two separate subjectivities that occur when a human voice sounds out and is heard by another. As such then, *Un re in ascolto* offers the ideal forum in which to observe the open voice, as it is diffracted into innumerable expressive possibilities through the opera’s deliberately ‘open’ construction. The remainder of this chapter will explore in detail: 1) how the labyrinthine web of allusions and literary references activates and displays the inherent multivalency of the open voice; 2) how the work fragments the ‘text’ of the operatic vocal style to reveal the expansive open voice beyond these closed stylistic constructions; and 3) *Un re in ascolto*’s examination of the ‘role of the receiver’ in opera, and the reconfiguration of relative subject positions in the listening encounter.

1) The open voice, character and diegesis in *Un re in ascolto*

The open voice, as a concept, can be seen demonstrated and borne out through the characteristically ‘open’ construction of the work’s libretto and diegesis: just as the listener is called upon to construct her own understanding of the words and music she hears, or dramatic action she sees, so too does the sounding voice accommodate and respond to each contextual reading. By choosing one of an array of expressive and associative possibilities presented by *Un re in ascolto*’s multi-layered, highly referential construction, she in effect ‘chooses’ what voice she hears from among the multitude of potential forms the voice can inhabit. While the case can be made that this is true of any incarnation of the sounding voice in a performative context, *Un re in ascolto* offers an invaluable

opportunity to observe this process of choice and collaboration at work, as it explicitly demonstrates its own 'open', multi-layered construction, and deliberately invites the listener to find his own links, associations and meanings within its extensive collage of possibilities. The musicologist Raymond Fearn observed the specific 'open work' character of the piece when he wrote that,

Through the dream sequence and the memory theatre, constant elements of Berio's dramatic vocabulary [in] *Un re in ascolto*, the composer was able to place on stage a complex and often bewildering array of dramatic actions and narratives through which the active listener must somehow find a path, an *opera aperta* in which the listener's perceptions of the work were to be guided rather than determined by the composer.²²

In an interview with Umberto Eco in 1984, Berio commented on this 'openness' of form, suggesting some ways a listener could find a path of understanding through the work.

If someone feels lost they can hang onto Prospero, to his linear quality, and just follow him and 'die' with him without looking around [...] Alternatively they can just follow the music and the stage. There are countless ways of listening and watching and, as always, who has more receives more.²³

In creating an opera about listening, Calvino and Berio wished to evoke the image of a labyrinth, to suggest the potentially infinite web of linked meanings and references that Barthes' different 'types' of listening suggest. In an introductory essay for the programme that accompanied the work's premiere in 1984, Berio wrote,

I plunged enthusiastically into the labyrinth of representative possibilities which the complex semiological analysis of Barthes would suggest. But it was really a labyrinth without exits: too huge and too detailed to be synthesised with gestures, and to be assimilated into any form of musical dramaturgy in a conventional theatrical space. Listening implies an infinite number of correlations and interpretations.²⁴

In the context of a staged operatic work, listening implies hearing the sound of the human voice. Hearing it in this 'labyrinth' of myriad semiological possibilities, the voice by

²² Fearn, *Italian Opera since 1945*, 90.

²³ Luciano Berio, 'Dialogue between you and me', trans. Francesca Franchi, in programme for Royal Opera House performance of *Un re in ascolto* (London, 1989).

²⁴ Berio, 'Dialogue between you and me'.

necessity appears in a similarly ambiguous and multifaceted situation. In evoking 'listening in all its forms', the voice is heard in its inherent openness as it shifts, changes and adapts its guise according to the character it is heard to represent, the emotion it bears, or the ambiguous critical position it inhabits in the narrative and musical fabric of the work.

'A complex web of sources'

The allusions and references that make up the drama and text of *Un re in ascolto* are extensive. The work's text, made up of 'a complex web of sources [...] themselves intricately interrelated through games of citation and revision', creates a constant sense of ambiguity and mobility throughout the work, at every level of plot, narrative and structure.²⁵ Berio was reluctant to call the work an opera in the traditional sense, and denied the work even had what could be called a libretto.

Properly speaking, *Un re in ascolto* does not have a libretto. The King is not prisoner of a libretto: that is, the text isn't presented as a story to be told, but rather as a series of situations that refer continually to a story in progress, to fragments of potential tales [...] I prefer to think of *Un re in ascolto* as a musical action, even if I am rather sceptical about synthetic definitions which don't set themselves in an historical perspective.²⁶

The kaleidoscopic interplay of blurred texts and references was the result of a long and sometimes fraught collaboration between the composer and writer Italo Calvino. Calvino, who by this time was renowned in international literary circles for his innovative and revolutionary explorations of literary forms, in which he exploded traditional notions of narrative linearity and the stable relationship between the text and its reader, had previously worked with Berio on the work *La Vera Storia* (1977-81), another 'musical action' of essentially 'open' form.²⁷ The work is constructed in such a way as to invite the listener's own collaboration in constructing their own, individual experience and understanding of

²⁵ Schwartz, 'Prospero's Isle and the Siren's rocks', 24.

²⁶ Berio, 'Dialogue between you and me'.

²⁷ Fearn, *Italian Opera since 1945*, 175-6.

the work, in Berio's words 'to enhance our consciousness of the fact that we ourselves are the only ones who are able to fit a story as it is told into our own experience of the world.'²⁸

The two men had the idea of an opera which would explore different 'types' of listening, inspired by Roland Barthes' essay, and would 'focus on the psychological and interpretive dimensions [of listening] in order to concentrate on a completely modern aspect: that of what occupies the intersubjective space of communication.'²⁹ Over the years 1978 to 1980, Calvino developed a scenario and libretto to support these complex themes. By 1979 his suggestions had developed into the outline of a libretto, in three acts, with the definitive title, of a king who sits in his castle constantly listening for any sound that might signal his impending death or downfall, as musicologist Tomasso Pomilio writes, 'a prisoner of his 'palazzo-orecchio' entangled in webs of conspiracy, that are the basis and the consequence of his own form of power'.³⁰

This scenario and original structure did not survive the collaborative correspondence between Calvino and Berio; the composer retained the shadowy outline of the original narrative of a king-like figure in his 'listening-kingdom', but ultimately adapted and 'chaoticised' the plot with the introduction of a host of 'Shakespearian reverberations'.³¹ The opera now included a number of characters from Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*, but with additional textual and musical allusions to an 18th century Singspiel *Die Geisterinsel*, a libretto based on Shakespeare's play composed by Friedrich Wilhelm Gotter in 1790. Berio, knowing the libretto had been sent to Mozart shortly before his death in 1791 believed that the composer 'must have been highly impressed by it', and had intended to set it to music as a sort of '*Die Zauberflöte Part II*'.³² In fact, unknown to Berio, Mozart had died before he could receive the finished libretto, an error that, according to Mathias Theodor Vogt, allowed Berio legitimately to 'regard himself as Mozart's executor' by subsequently setting fragments of the original Singspiel.³³ The other Shakespearian

²⁸ Luciano Berio, cit. in 'La Vera Storia', *Universal Editions* [website], <<http://www.universaledition.com/Luciano-Berio/composers-and-works/composer/54/work/3291>> accessed 15th July 2016.

²⁹ Laura Cosso, "Un re in ascolto": Berio Calvino e altri', *Berio*, ed. Enzo Restagno (Torino: EDT, 1995), 114.

³⁰ Tomasso Pomilio, 'Scrittura dell'ascolto: Calvino in Berio', *Dramaturgie Musicale Contemporaine en Europe* [online resource] <http://www2.univ-paris8.fr/DMCE/page.php?page=9#Un_re_2> accessed 1st July, 2013, p.1; also in Giordano Ferrari, ed. *Le théâtre musical de Luciano Berio II: De Un re in ascolto à Un cronaca del luogo* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2016) 117-144.

³¹ Pomilio, *Dramaturgie Musicale Contemporaine en Europe*, 2. For an account of the correspondence between Calvino and Berio see also Claudia Di Luzio, 'Berio, Calvino und Prospero: *Un re in ascolto* reflektiert', *Mitteilungen der Paul Sacher Stiftung*, 19 (2006), 34-39.

³² Vogt, 'Listening as a Letter of Uriah', 179.

³³ *Ibid.*, 179.

‘reverberation’ came in the form of adapted extracts from WH Auden’s poem *The Sea and the Mirror: A Commentary on Shakespeare’s The Tempest*, originally published in 1944. The poem is comprised of a series of dramatic monologues spoken by various characters from *The Tempest*, speaking after the play has ended.

As well as the Shakespearian references, Berio added yet another layer of ‘meta-textual’ resonance to the work by including excerpts from his own correspondence with Calvino as fragments of dialogue between characters in the opera; extracts from letters in which the two men discuss and disagree over points of drama or libretto were put in the mouths of onstage characters in the final version of the libretto. The conflicting agenda of the two men in approaching the libretto was later described by Berio as arising from the essential autonomy and distinction between text and music, and what he viewed as the necessity of music to ‘have the upper hand’:

I love and am greatly fascinated by the world of ideas of Calvino, Sanguineti and yourself [Eco]: so much so that I find a wonderful, though perhaps unconscious complementarity between you, different as you are. Why have I turned to you three and still do? Because text and music must each have their autonomy, and an analogous degree of complexity and dignity. Why does it sometimes happen that I take you to pieces? Because, I repeat, music must have the upper hand.³⁴

Berio elaborates, in this interview with Umberto Eco, on the difficult genesis of the opera’s final libretto, and Calvino’s companion short story of the same name, given the existence of Berio’s pre-conceived musical ideas and the necessity to build the dramatic situation around these compositional processes:

The idea of listening was Italo’s, but the text is only partly his [...] After innumerable vicissitudes – interesting ones though – Italo wrote some very beautiful fragments describing the inner thoughts of a grand old man of the theatre as he lies dying. I used Shakespeare, Auden and Gotter to place these texts of Italo’s – almost brief monodramas – in a context whose situation and actions I had already decided upon. This isn’t the place to try and explain the reasons for so much trouble, and of the proliferations from Italo’s text – which later on he condensed into a story with the same title, *Un re in ascolto*.³⁵

³⁴ Luciano Berio, ‘Eco listens’.

³⁵ Ibid.

In the *mise-en-scene* of *Un re in ascolto*, the unnamed island of Shakespeare and Gotter is replaced by Prospero's opera house, an onstage kingdom in which his authority holds sway over the other characters. In the first act, the scene is set in the backstage of an opera house, showing us Prospero's office, the rehearsal space and dressing rooms; in the course of the second act these divisions are withdrawn, creating a darkened onstage space with no clear outlines. We find Prospero in the opening scene alone in his office, pondering what sort of production he wishes to create, as he sings a lyrical solo aria; each number and scene that follows traces an aspect of this production process, as Prospero discusses production details with the Director (Regista) of the opera house, auditions singers, and oversees the sometimes chaotic rehearsals of dancers, chorus acrobats and actors. Over the course of the two acts, Prospero auditions four solo female singers, culminating in the audition of the 'Protagonista', the unnamed heroine of the production for whom it is implied Prospero has been searching. Much of the text of these 'auditions', as well as text we hear being rehearsed by the 'Actor', comes not from Shakespeare's play directly, but from parts of *The Sea and the Mirror* where the characters of *The Tempest* finally address Prospero, and reject the patriarchal, meddling authority with which he has presumed to manipulate and direct the actions of all the characters around him.

In the course of the opera, the delineations between characters in Prospero's opera house, and from Shakespeare's *Tempest* become blurred, giving some characters two interchangeable names in the work's score. Woven through these quotations and fragments are the extracts taken verbatim from Berio and Calvino's correspondence, for instance in the duet between Prospero and the Regista, when the Regista calls for a 'servant character, who is like an animal, ugly and dull' – describing the character of the Actor, who is also at times called Venerdi, or Friday, a reference to his Caliban type character in the intended production. We see also the Mime, mute throughout the opera, and described by Prospero in his correspondence/duet as 'a delicate creature, maybe invisible, seen in the king's imagination, with a voice among many, that only he hears'; in the score he is also referred to as Ariel, in tribute to the fairy sprite who accompanies Prospero in the original play. We also meet an array of characters natural to an opera house such as the Pianist, a trio of male singers, three female auditionees and finally the 'Protagonista' of the intended production. As the inhabitants of the opera house pursue their rehearsals and preparations, we hear sounds of a threatened incursion into the opera house from an outside attack by terrorists – the first half ends with sounds of gunshots and an ambulance siren coming from 'outside' Prospero's onstage kingdom. As the opera progresses,

Prospero falls ill, and foresees his own death. In the second half of the opera, he becomes immobilised, sitting in the centre of the stage to carry out the auditions for his production. He becomes weaker, and a doctor, a nurse and then a lawyer are called, while the chorus, acrobats, actors and other performers surround him and comment anxiously on the state of his health. Finally, Prospero auditions a soprano soloist who appears to have the ideal voice for which he has been searching; she sings an aria declaring paradoxically that she will never sing in Prospero's theatre, or submit to his authority, and then disappears. Following her departure Prospero sings a final aria of lament, and dies; all of the performers and characters bid him farewell and drift offstage, leaving Prospero dead, and his opera unmade.

Blurred character and diegesis

The sounding voice forms a tangible, resonating central point in the realisation of the constantly shifting and intersecting layers of narrative, diegesis and reference in *Un re in ascolto*. In tracing the extent of this vast array of sources, and the instability of any fixed narrative points in the work, both Arman Schwartz and Björn Heile have considered the curious effects of these uncertain character positions on the status of the voices that are heard to sing throughout the work. Schwarz writes that,

The preceding summary should have suggested that, from the beginning, the opera is full of onstage performances: auditions, rehearsals, and the like. These onstage songs have a clear motivation: Berio's characters are singers, and singing is what they do.³⁶

However, a degree of confusion arises when one considers the constant oscillations that seem to occur between what Schwartz, drawing on Carolyn Abbate's analysis of operatic conventions, terms phenomenal music, songs that the characters are aware of singing and have plot-driven reasons to sing, and the music that surrounds operatic characters of which, by convention, they are unaware.

³⁶ Schwartz, 'Prospero's isle', 92.

In the operas Abbate describes, the consciousness of listeners (allied of course with the authority of composers) and the deafness of characters is generally at odds [...] In contrast, Berio's central figure – constantly listening to, and commenting on, the sounds around him – is in a situation parallel to that of the operatic spectator from the very beginning. As Prospero passes through another version of Barthes' narrative, the musical signs that articulate the stages of his journey place both him and the audience in increasingly complicated relations to the 'reality' of the stage-world.³⁷

This constant slippage between versions of onstage 'reality' creates an ambiguity that invites listeners, in the best tradition of the *opera aperta* to bring their own ears and ideas to bear, once again prevailing on the 'receiver' of the work to plot their own path of understanding and reception. Among all of these constantly shifting metaphysical layers, the human voice sounds out, a fixed resonating point round which these uncertain realities revolve, and to which the listener's ears and modes of listening are drawn. Björn Heile points out that when the onstage rehearsal piano is heard, it is invariably accompanied by the pit orchestra, and asks 'where, ontologically speaking, is this music coming from?'³⁸ The voice echoes and answers this ontological conundrum, displaying its essential 'openness' to the requirements and meanings that accrue around it.

Audizione I

Examples of this blurring of meanings and narrative outlines proliferate throughout the opera; the first audition is a key instance of the voice's 'diffraction' into numerous different, simultaneous forms and guises. The 'Soprano' appears with her pianist, and begins her number, based on extracts from *The sea and the mirror*. She sings the piece in a straightforward way, as with any audition number, but suddenly, after nearly twenty bars of singing, she turns and addresses Prospero directly, by name, causing a rupture in the diegetic scenario being played out: Why does the singer direct her words at Prospero, if she is simply singing an audition aria? How is she to know his thoughts, and how can she answer them? Can the director hear this bizarre aberration from her audition text? Does this put a completely new significance on her words when she sings

³⁷ Ibid., 54; Carolyn Abbate, *Unsung voices* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1991)

³⁸ Björn Heile, 'Prospero's death', 10.

...your all is partial Prospero

Your need to love me shall never know me.

And what of the ominous setting of Prospero's name when she sings this phrase, with a marked crescendo and decrescendo on the elongated vowels of his name? (Fig. 3.1)



Fig. 3.1

The words the soprano sings are an amalgamation of fragments from WH Auden's poem, drawn from the monologues of a number of different characters – in that moment her voice embodies that of Miranda of Shakespeare's play, re-asserting her thwarted independence, with the associations of a range of supporting characters including Ferdinand, Antonio, Master and Boatswain ringing through her words, as the text she sings is drawn from fragments of respective parts. By extension, the voice resonates with the associations of Mozart's unwritten music for Gotter's 18th century Singspiel, in turn echoing characters and soprani from all the opera performances and productions that have been influenced by Mozart's prodigious output. It is the voice of an operatic singer auditioning for a part, the words irrelevant to the music staff's appraisal of her technical ability, her expression, musicality, professionalism; her sounding operatic voice forms the locus of a further network of links and images, the technical training of a classical singer, her isolated hours of practice, the aspirations she harbours and the disappointments she has experienced in her career, the cold she might have caught that morning and the lesson she has booked for later that day. The network of associative links with which the sound of the voice reverberates is potentially endless.

The diegetic instability is underlined in the closing bars of the soprano's audition, once again framing the voice as 'open' to the interplay of onstage 'realities', when the soprano sings 'Addio', bidding farewell at the close of her song. At first, it sounds like a farewell to Prospero, perhaps answering his previously morbid thoughts of death by bidding him a

Concertate I

A similar ambiguity of roles, text and narrative is played out in the first Concertate number, as the director, Venerdi and three singers assemble onstage to rehearse pieces of the upcoming production. The voice of their onstage accompanying pianist provides a curious snapshot of this slippage between layers of onstage ‘reality’; the score calls on him to ‘suggest with his voice the part of a missing singer’ (che accenna con la voce alla parte di una cantante assente), and we can see his sung interjections alongside the trio’s homophonic lines in the score. (Fig. 3.3) As Björn Heile points out, ‘ontologically’ the pianist’s role or narrative position is unclear, and yet the sound of his voice incorporates these numerous ambiguous layers of diegesis. As such, we can hear the untrained voice of a pianist called upon to ‘sing in’ for an errant singer; in his vocal ‘suggestion’ we can hear resonating the echo of the fully trained bel canto delivery of the absent professional voice. We can hear the ‘backstage’ workings of a theatre production, usually hidden from the view of the auditorium; however, there is peculiar dissonance when we learn that the score lists the pianist as a singing character with a baritone voice ‘who plays the piano’, implying the voice we hear is in fact that of a professional singer playing the role of a non-singer. Each shift between onstage, to backstage, to extra-theatrical ‘reality’ brings a different perspective on the voice we hear, offering a number of distinct voices in the resonating sound of a single one.

The musical score for 'Concertate I' features four staves. The top three staves are for the vocalists, labeled 'Tre Cantanti e Fisarmonica' on the left. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The vocal parts are marked 'p (dolcemente)' and sing the lyrics: 'Ma noi, ma noi, ma noi in que - sto luo - go... tran - quil - lo e so - li - ta - rio...'. The fourth staff is for the piano, labeled 'Pianista 1' and 'Pianoforte (sulla scena)'. It begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The piano part is marked 'p (dolcemente)' and sings the lyrics: 'Mi guar - do in - die - tro men - tre il so - le scen - de'. A stage direction in brackets reads: '[Quando non suona, il Pianista dirige i Tre Cantanti]'. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

Fig. 3.3

2) Deconstructing vocal technique in *Un re in ascolto*: interrogating the ‘text’ of the voice

In basing *Un re in ascolto* on Barthes’ essay ‘Listening’, the work is in effect an interrogation of the ‘types’ of listening that Barthes proposes, specifically as they relate to the sounds and materials of the operatic world. Central of course to these materials is the *sine qua non* of opera, the operatic singing voice. Umberto Eco, in his interview with Berio in 1984, drew attention to the centrality and importance of the voice to the opera’s exploration and critique of listening, suggesting that the operatic voice had become moulded into the expectations placed upon it by the traditional operatic listener, or ‘theatrical consumer’.

It seems to me that even in opera, it’s the voice that interests you, not the story [...] The voice, like every other material, carries with it the history of the uses that have been made of it [...it] is a social convention, and like all social conventions it generates a ‘horizon of expectation’ in the person for whom it’s intended, the ‘theatrical consumer’.⁴⁰

To tease out the complexities of the sounding voice and the ‘horizon of expectations’ generated by the operatic setting, we can refer in more detail to the listening ‘types’ outlined in Barthes’ essay, and consider their relationship with the voices of the onstage and ‘real-life’ opera houses that *Un re in ascolto* inhabits.

In his essay, Barthes describes the first type of listening as indexical, that is, listening that is oriented to indices or markers of the surrounding environment. This type he describes as the most basic form of listening, common to animals and humans, essential to their survival in the detection of potential dangers, or possible prey:

On this level, nothing distinguishes animal from man: the wolf listens for a (possible) noise of its prey, the hare for a (possible) noise of its hunter, the child and the lover for the approaching footsteps which might be the mother’s or the beloved’s. This first listening might be called an alert.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Umberto Eco, ‘Eco listens’.

⁴¹ Roland Barthes, ‘Listening’, in *The responsibility of forms*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Hill and Wang, 1985), 245.

It is this type of listening that maps out the space and territory of the individual, encompassing not only indications of imminent danger or pleasure, but also the subtler nuances of our domestic world: through the sounds of doors opening and closing, footsteps, voices, radios or televisions, pipes, plumbing, whether these sounds are customary when all is well, or whether there are variations, indicating something unfamiliar in one's surroundings and routine. In *Un re in ascolto*, the 'king', Prospero, listens constantly to the sounds of his opera house, listening for the customary sounds that indicate the smooth daily running of his territory. These sounds encompass all of the everyday sounds of a working theatre, rehearsals, song practice, chatting voices among the performers and stagehands; any strange sound among this soundscape might indicate an intrusion into this world, perhaps a threat to his authority.

Barthes describes the second type of listening in his essay as 'a deciphering; what the ear tries to intercept are certain signs.' It is a listening that is attuned to codes, to the systems of meaning in which sounds become not just sonic traces, but signifiers, units of meaning within a larger pre-established system of correlation. It is of this listening that Barthes remarks 'Here, no doubt, begins the human: I listen the way I read, i.e. according to certain codes.'⁴² This type of listening underpins all of our use of language; by engaging in a system of reciprocally understood signifiers and codes, the speaker and the listener are able to communicate thoughts, one to the other, through the medium of vocally produced sonic shapes and gestures. As such, this type of listening is associated with what is hidden from view, requiring the mediation of a mutually understood system of signifiers to expose the inherent meanings to the listener.

What is listened for is no longer the *possible* (the prey, the threat, or the object of desire that occurs without warning), it is the *secret*: that which, concealed in reality, can reach human consciousness only through a code, which serves simultaneously to encipher and decipher that reality. Listening is henceforth linked (in a thousand varied indirect forms) to a hermeneutics: to listen is to adopt an attitude of decoding what is obscure, blurred or mute, in order to make available to consciousness the 'underside' of meaning (what is experienced, postulated, intentionalized as hidden.)⁴³

⁴² Barthes, 'Listening', 245.

⁴³ Ibid., 249.

Un re in ascolto stages this 'structural' listening in the form of the conventions, codes and texts of Prospero's opera house.⁴⁴ Along with the audience, everything he hears, from the musical score, to the voices of the auditioning singers, to the text of the libretto is subject to a system of deciphering and decoding according to the parameters and codes of semantic language, of musical text, and of the historical practices and formal techniques associated with the performance of classical opera. It is these genre-based expectations that Berio decries in his interview with Eco, and declares in *Un re in ascolto* his intention to subvert these 'Pavlovian' responses, by opening the work up to the listener's own mode of reading and understanding.

My concern was not to create a 'system of expectations', but [...] to control developments and relationships between the various musical characters, their conflicts, and the polyphonic density of the whole. The spectator, your 'theatrical consumer'; can select his 'system of expectations' for himself from the expressive range that I offer him. So I would say that *Un re in ascolto* elaborates various levels of reading [...] I would really hardly know what name to give to the more complex modes of reading, nor do I intend to try.⁴⁵

Essential to the realisation and delivery of musical and dramatic texts in opera, the operatic voice is highly stylised, and the modes of delivery and expression subject to a highly codified system of signification and meaning, developed through centuries of operatic practice. As a *mise en scene* of Barthes' second type of 'structural' listening, *Un re in ascolto* mounts a critique of the structures and expectations around the operatic voice, in order to pave the way for the possibility of Barthes' 'third type' or 'modern' listening, which 'no longer quite resembles what has here been called *listening to indices* or *listening to signs*.'⁴⁶ In Barthes's essay, this type of listening is characterised by an openness on the part of the listener to hear beyond 'certain determined, classified signs' instead aiming at 'not what is said or emitted but who speaks, who emits', or as in the case of opera, 'who

⁴⁴ Robert Adlington, 'The crises of sense': listening to *Un re in ascolto*, *Dramaturgie Musicale Contemporaine en Europe* [online resource], http://www2.univ-paris8.fr/DMCE/page.php?page=9#Un_re_2 accessed 1st July, 2013, 1-20; also in Giordano Ferrari, ed. *Le théâtre musical de Luciano Berio II: De Un re in ascolto à Un cronaca del luogo* (Paris: l'Harmattan, 2016); see also Rose Rosengard Subotnik, 'Towards a deconstruction of structural listening: a critique of Schoenberg, Adorno and Stravinsky' in *Deconstructive Variations: Music and Reason in Western Society* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

⁴⁵ Berio, 'Eco listens'.

⁴⁶ Barthes, 'Listening', 258.

speaks, who sings'. Barthes describes this attitude as 'a free listening [...] which circulates, which permutes, which disaggregates, by its mobility, the fixed network of the roles of speech'⁴⁷ – here in Prospero's opera house this listening disrupts the fixed networks not of speech, but of song, and of the structures of signification and expectation that undergird the sound of the operatic voice.

In critiquing the 'texts' of the operatic voice, *Un re in ascolto* carries out an unflinching dissection of the voice along its many stylistic parameters, breaking down and frustrating the listening expectations of the opera 'consumer' at every turn. Through theatrical processes of vocal deconstruction that owe much to the Brechtian aesthetics of 'alienation' or *Verfremdungseffekt*, by exposing the technical and cultural workings of the voice, the listener is prompted to a re-appraisal of what he hears, displaying instead a human voice that is 'open' to the revised listening encounter. In responding to Eco's suggestions on the centrality of the sounding voice to the operatic reconfigurations of *Un re in ascolto*, Berio commented that,

I'd say that styles and techniques of singing play a fundamental role in shaping the expectations of the 'theatrical consumer'. What's important is to use these vocal styles pertinently, and as Brecht would once again say, with a certain detachment.⁴⁸

By exposing the mechanics and embedded codes of the operatic voice, through parody, deconstruction and juxtaposition, *Un re in ascolto* highlights the constructed nature of the operatic voice, undermining its onstage appearance as an effortless sonorous vehicle for text and emotion, by breaking it down into constituent stages of technical training and artificiality, and placing it along a spectrum of stylised utterance. This spectrum reaches from fully realised bel canto singing technique, through pitched speech, to ordinary speech, murmurs, gasps and non-linguistic vocal utterances, and finally to the extreme end of this vocal spectrum, that is, silence. In exploring how the work skilfully positions the standard bel canto singing technique among a complex and constantly shifting diegetic landscape, and among a wide array of vocal sounds, we can see how *Un re in ascolto* peels back the layers of technical and expressive construction to offer a 'different' voice, the 'open' voice that invites a similarly 'open' approach to the listening encounter beyond the embedded 'expectations' of operatic culture.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 259.

⁴⁸ Berio, 'Eco listens'.

Types of vocal delivery in *Un re in ascolto*

Throughout *Un re in ascolto*, the vocal sounds we hear are varied along a spectrum of stylised vocal production, and also varied in timbre, delivery and gesture. However, the bel canto style of singing is positioned unmistakably as the ‘lingua franca’ of the operatic characters, the idiomatic and idealised vocal style of traditional operatic performance. The other gradations of vocal production we find in the opera are suggested to diverge from this ideal, and perhaps to have a lesser validity and dramatic authority within the parameters of an idiomatic opera production. The framing of the traditional operatic voice in this way invites the listener to question its parameters and values, when placed in the context of a spectrum of alternative modes of vocal production. The various ‘levels’ of vocal technique can be broken down loosely into (a) Bel Canto, (b) Pitched Speech, (c), Untrained singing (d) Silence, and (e) Ordinary Speech.

a) *Bel canto*

Bel Canto here refers to a style of singing in which operatic singers are trained to produce sound of sufficient power to carry over an orchestra, while observing the pitches and text prescribed by an opera libretto, and is the style that forms the expected standard of operatic singing in conventional opera. Arguably, ‘bel canto’ refers to a specific style of light Italianate singing technique developed in Italy in the late 18th and early 19th centuries,⁴⁹ but the term is often used interchangeably with ‘operatic’ style voices; in his discussion of vocal style in *Un re in ascolto*, Berio uses the term synonymously with ‘large

⁴⁹ Arguably, ‘bel canto’ refers to a smaller sub-category of singing technique developed in Italy in the 18th and 19th centuries, but can also be understood as the mode of singing employed throughout the world of operatic and classical vocal performance, to distinguish it from other ‘non-classical’ styles as music theatre, pop, and rock singing. It is in this sense that I use the term here. See: James A. Stark, *Bel canto: a history of vocal pedagogy* (Toronto; London: University of Toronto Press, 1999); Owen Jander et al, ‘Singing’, *Grove Music Online*, [website] <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/25869?q=singing&search=quick&pos=1&start=1#firsthit>>, accessed 18th May 2013.

‘operatic voices, capable of reaching from the proscenium to the gods, and getting across a symphony orchestra *en route*.’⁵⁰

The centrality of the bel canto voice is established from the outset of the opera with Prospero’s opening aria, as he sets out the dramatic exposition in a fully realised bel canto baritone voice, invoking immediately the conventions of traditional opera dramaturgy. His name and his role suggests a number of associations and resonances, all suggesting a position of authority, wisdom and power. He reflects the character of Prospero in the *Tempest*, a kingly figure who has magical power and control over a host of subjects on his island kingdom, while his ostensible role as the owner of the opera house and producer of its next opera suggests the authority of similar figures in ‘real life’ opera institutions, whose decisions have direct implications for all of the singers, musicians, performers and backstage staff we see represented in *Un re in ascolto*. The following duet however, quickly confounds these operatic vocal conventions, with the introduction of the Actor’s stammering vocal line in pitched speech, pulling away the ‘velvet curtain’ of operatic illusion around the bel canto voice, and exposing the speaking, fallible ‘everyday’ voice of an untrained singer.

b) Pitched speech

In the *Duetto I* between the Director and the Actor, also known as Venerdi or Friday, the difference in vocal technique between the two forms is the central motivation of the exchange. Here, the Actor’s pitched speech is notated in the score with flattened noteheads, distinguishing it from conventional classical delivery. The Director coaches the stammering Actor in the delivery of his lines, constantly correcting him with an expansive full voiced tenor delivery. (Fig. 3.4) We hear full bel canto singing from the Director against the faltering pitched speech of the actor, at the same pitches as the tenor voice and delivering the same text, giving rise to a stark contrast between the vocal technique, timbre, and expression of the two.

⁵⁰ Berio, ‘Eco listens’.

Regista

Venerdi

(cercando le parole, intimidito)

f (correggendo l'venerdì)

Si-len - zio, si-len - - - zio...

Si- si- si - len- si - len-zio...

len - zio, si-len - - - zio,

Fig. 3.4

The Regista's brusque correction of the Actor's delivery sets up an immediate association of the Regista's authoritative tenor voice and sung lines as the more 'correct' version of the rehearsed text, according with the 'horizon of expectations' of conventional 'structural' listening, but undermined by the Actor's failing attempts; the Actor/Venerdi's resonances with a Caliban figure imply a representation of uncultured, untamed existence, while his voice is similarly 'untrained' by the culture and civilisation of operatic technique and training.

c) *Untrained singing*

While operatic bel canto technique is positioned as the vocal and textual 'norm' within conventional opera, this expectation is constantly confounded by the array of other non-classical vocal behaviours throughout the opera; the *Concertato II* is one number in which the full gamut of these vocal behaviours can be heard overlaid simultaneously. The opening measures find the onstage pianist playing, and singing in an apparently 'untrained' voice as he accompanies himself, practicing an absent singer's part. This 'ordinary' singing is scored with conventional round note heads, with small brackets around each one. (Fig. 3.5) His voice in this instance becomes a reference and a counterpoint to the absent singer's operatic voice; here again, his untrained technique is heard highlighting this contrast and divergence from the bel canto sound.

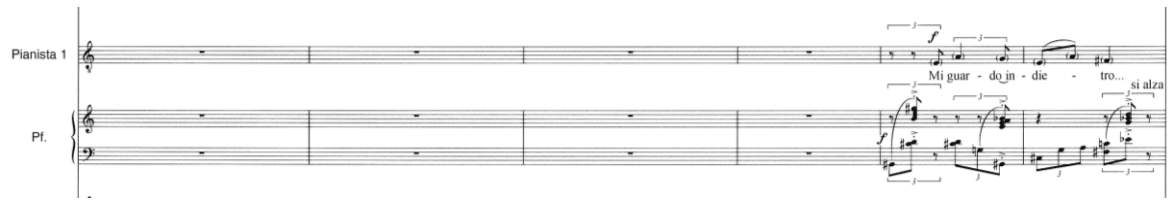


Fig. 3.5

Almost immediately, we hear the Actor rehearsing his lines, in pitched, declaimed speech; as he stumbles through his lines the Director interrupts him to sing the full words in a bel canto tenor voice. (Fig. 3.6) Again, this mirroring and repetition of text between the two voices picks up the distinction between the vocal timbres and techniques, and the Actor's divergence from the technical ideal exemplified by the Director. While this exchange occurs, the Pianist continues to sing his lines, creating a rapid crossover between the three different vocal sounds.



Fig. 3.6

d) Silence

The Director's vocal line following this trio episode continues to be notated in the score, despite his having nothing to sing. As the Actor continues rehearsing his lines in outbursts of ordinary speech, the Director's part is notated in the score by a single line, divided by barlines, over which are written instructions for his actions. Implicit in the Director's silence is his trained bel canto voice, its customary presence made even more evident in its silent absence, as the listener waits for the Director's inevitable corrections to the struggling Actor. (Fig. 3.7) This notional duet leads the listener's awareness along the spectrum of vocal technique, forming a contrast between the absent, implicit bel canto sound, the Actor's spoken words and pitched speech, and the silence of the waiting Director.



Fig. 3.7

e) Ordinary speech

At times during the opera we hear snatches of ‘ordinary’ speech, text delivered without any apparent projection or declamation, implying that what we are hearing is the ‘everyday’, extra-theatrical voice of a performer, their ‘real’ life and identity beginning to overlap with their onstage, professional persona. A clear instance of this Brechtian device is in the first duet, between the Regista and the Actor, whose stammering pitched speech seems to falter under the Director’s criticism, exhaustedly falling into normal speech for just one sentence. (Fig. 3.8)

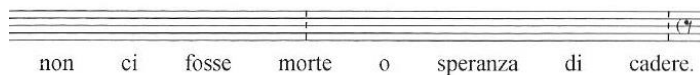


Fig. 3.8

Parody of vocal technique

In an echo of Brechtian theatre practice, the use of grotesquery and parody is key to the subversion and puncturing of conventional ‘expectations’ of the operatic voice, most notably in two duets between firstly Prospero and his Director, then between the Actor and the silent Mime. *Duetto II* between Prospero and the Director is formed of a conversation in which they argue about their respective intentions for the upcoming production. In the exchange, based on text drawn directly from the letters between Berio and Calvino, the Director envisions a production full of action and noise, while Prospero wishes it to be a more thoughtful introspective production:

Director: You said the action would erupt suddenly, with frenzied activity...

Prospero: No, I imagined the silence of expectation. The expectation of song [...]

Director: But you also spoke of a general upheaval, like a tempest.

Prospero: Maybe a tempest, or even a revolution, but peaceful, as in a dream. I do not know.⁵¹

The quarrel is conducted between the tenor voice of the Director and Prospero's deep baritone, echoing many such duets of traditional opera, in which a youthful tenor protagonist, most often the hero of the piece, argues with the older authority figure represented through the deeper tones of a baritone or bass voice. This resonance is borne out by the younger Director's desire for exuberant action, for upheaval and conflict, while the older figure counsels caution and restraint. Hearing these voices in their idiomatic operatic duet, we hear not only the sonorous vocal material of these two singers, but the tropes and archetypes associated with each of their voice types, and the archetypal characters and situations from opera history that resonate in their exchange.

The later duet between the Actor and the Mime is a re-enactment of this altercation, this time delivered through the Actor's pitched speech, and the Mime's expressive silence. As such, their duet parodies the voices in which the original exchange took place, replacing the archetypal baritone/tenor altercation, the operatic trope of age and wisdom in conflict with youth and impetuosity, with the 'uncivilised' untrained voice of Venerdi, and the almost absurd silence of the Mime.



Fig. 3.9

The mocking delivery of the Actor and the Mime wickedly parodies the authority and gravitas of the earlier duet, the Actor's pitched speech a grotesque approximation of

⁵¹ Regista: Tu dicevi che tutto comincia all'improvviso e che e subito tanta agitazione / Prospero: No, io pensavo a un silenzio come fosse un'attesa [...] Regista: Ma tu dicevi anche di un coinvolgimento generale, come fosse una tempesta / Prospero: Forse una tempesta, o una rivoluzione, ma pacifica, come in un sogno. Non so. *Un re in ascolto* (1983), 98-99.

Prospero's voice, while the mime's expressive silence acts as a *reductio ad absurdum* of operatic expectations. A similar parodic element is found in the Actor's solo aria entitled "Serenata" which comes towards the end of the first half of the opera, after there has been a violent altercation heard offstage, involving gunshots and ambulance sirens. Terrified, the Actor climbs up the scenery at the side of the stage, and delivers his aria in stammering pitched speech, 'singing'

Silence, awoken in the tempest,
Show us the concrete world that we love
Is all immaterial stuff, and all on the other side of the wall is silence.⁵²

The text reflects a thoughtful inner monologue, locating the number firmly in the operatic tradition of a solo character aria, in which someone comments on the action, and declaims his inner feelings on the matter; it resonates strongly with Prospero's opening aria in which he too expresses his inner thoughts about his situation. This resonance is invoked and cruelly parodied however by the Actor's vocal technique and comically distressed delivery: his words are set in broken syllables, as he stammers in terror, clinging to the stage rigging for dear life. Even the title of the aria is set in quotation marks in the score, giving its title "Serenata" an ironic tone that matches the utter lack of serenity in the Actor's delivery. (Fig. 3.10)

"SERENATA"

The musical score for "SERENATA" is written for a full orchestra and a vocal soloist (Venerdi). The tempo is marked as 104 beats per minute, and the time signature is 3/4. The vocal line is in Italian, with lyrics: "Si le si le si le si le si le si le si le / Si le si le si le Si - len - zio, il fe ri fe ri fe ri ri". The orchestration includes Flauto, Oboe, Clarinetto, Clarinetto basso, Corno, Tromba, and Venerdi. Dynamics range from p (piano) to f (forte). The score is marked with "1^a senza sord." for the Tromba and "p quasi cantato" for the Venerdi.

⁵² Silenzio, svegliati nella tempesta, mostraci che il mondo concreto che noi amiamo è tutta roba immateriale, e che tutto il resto dall'altro parte del muro è silenzio. *Un re in ascolto* (1983), 152-8.

Fig. 3.10

Through this extensive and systematic dissection of the classical vocal technique of conventional opera, *Un re in ascolto* exposes the structural parameters that underpin opera's usually seamless vocal performances, showing this mode of delivery to be highly codified within a complex and rigid system of expressive, musical and stylistic signifiers. Here the 'text' of vocal technique and delivery is broken down, fragmented and rearranged to lay bare its constructed, artificial nature. We begin to glimpse the voices that lie 'behind' the stylised onstage incarnation, suggesting the voices, bodies and lives of the characters, performers and listeners as they are lived, daily in the extra-theatrical 'real' world. As such, these onstage voices are prised open to view, their vast inferential and expressive possibilities opened up and incorporated into the fabric of the opera. Here the open voice invites the listener to bring her own associations, experiences and extra theatrical resonances to bear, creating and completing the individual experience of each voice that she hears.

3) The open voice, listening and subject positions in *Un re in ascolto*

The open voice in *Un re in ascolto* is not simply a site of multiple shifting and ambiguous meanings and referential associations. In its very subject matter, the work delves also into the profound interaction of two individual subjectivities that such a listening encounter with the voice implies. Here, the usual roles of listener and vocalist are re-examined, questioning the seemingly unequal, fixed roles of a silent passive listener and an active vocalist. If the voice here is presented as 'open' to a listener's active completion, what then does that suggest about the role of the listener, and his responsibility to 'choose' how and what he hears?

The 'openness' of the human voice to a potentially infinite network of referential meanings is of course predicated on the listening attitude of the 'addressee', as Eco described the receiver of an 'open work' of art – here in the context of Berio's opera, the human voice embodies these aspects of the 'opera aperta', in its multiplicity of possible readings, and in

its reliance on the listener to hear and construct the voice he ultimately experiences. To borrow Eco's own description, the voice,

...even though it is produced by following an explicit or implicit poetics of necessity, is effectively open to a virtually unlimited range of possible readings, each of which causes the work to acquire new vitality in terms of one particular taste, or perspective, or personal *performance*.⁵³

The 'particular taste' or 'perspective' of the listener is essential to this symbiotic process of meaning construction; as with Eco's 'open work', so too the human voice can be perceived as "open" to a continuous generation of internal relations which the addressee must uncover and select in his act of perceiving the totality of incoming stimuli.⁵⁴

The involvement and indeed reliance on the listener or reader of a work in its ultimate completion was a theme that infused much of Italo Calvino's literary output, in an echo of the 'Gruppo '63' neo-avant garde sense of iconoclasm towards assumed power structures and subject positions in art, society and politics. At the time of *Un re in ascolto*'s development, Calvino had recently published his influential novel *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* (1979) in which his text fragmented and explored the conventionally fixed subject relationship between the author and the reader, implicating and placing the reader as a central character in the novel, and as a collaborator in the ultimate creation of the unique novel each individual reader would encounter.⁵⁵ On encountering the artwork, whether the novel, the short story, or even the opera, Calvino emphasised the necessity for the receiver to contribute his or her own unique perceptions to the completion of the work, when he wrote, 'reading and experience of life are not two universes but one. Every experience of life, in order to be interpreted, calls on certain readings and is fused with them.'⁵⁶ This implication of the reader as an active agent in the work's creation is framed in *Se una notte* by the novel's explicitly self-referential address to the reader, right from the opening paragraph.

You are about to begin reading Italo Calvino's new novel, *If on a winter's night a traveler*. Relax. Concentrate. Dispel every other thought. Let the world around you

⁵³ Umberto Eco, 'The poetics of the open work' in *The open work*, trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1989), 21.

⁵⁴ Eco, *The Open Work*, 21.

⁵⁵ Beno Weiss, *Understanding Italo Calvino* (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1993).

⁵⁶ Italo Calvino, 'Introduction', in *The path to the nest of spiders*, trans. Archibald Colquhoun (Hopewell, N.J.: Ecco Press, 1995), cit. in Stephen Chubb, *I, writer, I, reader: the concept of self in the fiction of Italo Calvino* (Market Harborough: Troubador, 1997), 102.

fade. Best to close the door; the TV is always on in the next room. Tell the others right away, "No, I don't want to watch TV!" Raise your voice--they won't hear you otherwise--"I'm reading! I don't want to be disturbed!" Maybe they haven't heard you, with all that racket; speak louder, yell: "I'm beginning to read Italo Calvino's new novel!" Or if you prefer, don't say anything; just hope they'll leave you alone.⁵⁷

Similarly, in the short story version of *Un re in ascolto*, Calvino maintains a second person narrative throughout, addressing the reader as 'you' and conflating the 'character' of the reader with that of the eponymous king, describing how 'you' sit in the throne room of your castle, listening constantly for sounds of danger.

Sunk on your throne, you raise your hand to your ear, you shift the draperies of the baldaquin so that they will not muffle the slightest murmur, the faintest echo. For you the days are a succession of sounds, some distinct, some almost imperceptible; you have learned to distinguish them, to evaluate their provenance and their distance; you know their order, you know how long the pauses last; you are already awaiting every resonance or creak or clink that is about to reach your tympanum; you anticipate it in your imagination; if it is late in being produced, you grow impatient.⁵⁸

In using Barthes' essay 'Listening' as a source on which to base an opera libretto, Calvino and Berio sought to extend the context in which these respective subject 'voices' could be interrogated from the purely literary plane to the sonorous, musical and performative world of the opera house. Prospero, the king of the opera's title, is identified with the listening subject, the audience or the musical listener who attends opera, and who by implication, is forced to re-appraise his mode of listening encounter with the musical and vocal structures which surround him. The 'structural' or second type listening of Barthes' essay is undermined and critiqued, and with it, the authority and power accorded to the silent, hermeneutically or musically informed listener who hears, interprets and judges the singing voice without having to reveal or reciprocate in the vocal transaction. The third type, or 'modern' listening that Barthes' describes specifically involves the erasure of these unequal subject positions, where the listener aims towards what is to be heard behind or beyond the 'what' that is communicated through semiological and semantic

⁵⁷ Italo Calvino, *If on a winter's night a traveller*, trans. William Weaver (London: Vintage, 1998), 3.

⁵⁸ Calvino, 'A king Listens', 37-8.

structures, to the 'who' that is implicit in the resonating vocal sound. Here, in Barthes' words,

the roles implied by the act of listening no longer have the same fixity as in the past: there is no longer on one side, someone who speaks, gives himself away, confesses and, on the other someone who listens, keeps silent, judges and sanctions.⁵⁹

In encountering the voice in this way, Barthes' describes the creation of 'an inter-subjective space, where 'I am listening' also means 'listen to me,' in a transaction that acknowledges and constitutes the active presence of the listener just as much as the vocalist. According to Barthes, implicit in the sounding voice is an appeal to be heard, or an 'injunction to listen', inviting the listener into a mutually constitutive inter-subjective encounter.

The injunction to listen is the total interpellation of one subject by another: it places above everything else the quasi physical contact of these subjects (by voice and ear): it creates transference: 'listen to me' means 'touch me, know me, know that I exist' [...] Interpellation leads to an interlocution in which the listener's silence will be as active as the locutor's speech: listening speaks, one might say.⁶⁰

Putting on stage such a potentially ambiguous concept in the tangible context of a performed opera involves, by definition, the enactment of such listening between the sounds of the voices onstage, and the listening ears of Prospero, and by implication, of the listening audience members. Here, the sound of the voice becomes a testing ground for this reconfiguration of respective subject positions, calling on the listener to engage with the sonorities, timbres, inferences, meanings, the 'dispersion of signifiers' that a voice offers and that each listener will reconstruct and recombine according to her own unique experience and 'particular taste'. In his article on *Un re in ascolto*, and the complex referential links between the work's literary sources and its compositional construction, Arman Schwartz refers to this active involvement of the listener in the construction of what she ultimately hears as a 'dangerous, emancipatory listening', proposing that in such listening encounters 'what one hears is the body of the speaker [...] listening to it, finding oneself within it, all subject positions are abolished.'⁶¹ The centrality and importance of the voice to this 'emancipatory' listening encounter, and of its capacity to reflect and

⁵⁹ Barthes, 'Listening', 258.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 251.

⁶¹ Schwartz, *Prospero's isle*, 89.

diffract these potentially myriad different ‘readings’ is highlighted not in fact by a musicologist, but by an Italian philosopher of political discourse, Adriana Cavarero, in her 2003 book *For more than one voice – towards a philosophy of vocal expression*. Here, Cavarero takes the premise of Calvino’s short story as a starting point for no less than a radical re-appraisal of the place of the human voice in Western political culture and philosophy. She writes that,

[by] taking up the theme of voice, Calvino’s story offers a series of ideas that implicitly unsettles one of philosophy’s cornerstones [...] In contrast to what philosophy has done for centuries, the king-ear - motivated by the essential falsity of political discourse – concentrates on the vocal and ignores the semantic.⁶²

Cavarero turns Calvino and Berio’s depictions of Barthes’ ‘third type’ listening around to focus on its corollary, the sounding voice, and more specifically on what she terms ‘the relational valence of the vocal sphere’. In the context of the performed opera, the political realm becomes the realm of the aesthetic, as the work shows an operatic and musical culture in which second type, highly mediated ‘structural’ listening apparently prevails. The sounding voice in performance in *Un re in ascolto* stages both the ‘patinated’ vocal surface of structural musical listening, and simultaneously invokes the ‘vocal sphere’ in which subject positions between throat and ear, singer and listener, ‘open’ voice and receiver, can be constantly renewed and redrawn.

The power-play that Barthes describes in the act of vociferation and listening is elegantly evoked in *Un re in ascolto* in the series of auditions that Prospero holds to find the ideal voice for his intended opera. One of the perennial rituals of operatic and theatrical life, the auditions typify the unequal power relations described by Barthes in the ‘traditional’ structural listening situation, by which we encounter ‘the arrogant listening of a superior’, who ‘listens, keeps silent, judges and sanctions’.⁶³ Arman Schwartz describes these auditions, and their characteristic musical forms, as examples of Barthes’ first type of listening, in which ‘the question is not what is being sung [...] Prospero hears these auditions as reliable indexes of the opera house: his world is still in order.’⁶⁴ However, they can be heard too as instances of second type, ‘structural’ listening, as the voice is presented to Prospero in the context of the complex web of signifiers and codes that characterise

⁶² Adriana Cavarero, *For more than one voice: toward a philosophy of vocal expression*, trans. Paul A. Kottman (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2005), 2.

⁶³ Barthes, ‘Listening’, 258.

⁶⁴ Schwartz, ‘Prospero’s isle’, 93.

classical vocal practice. From the sound of the bel canto technique the singers employ, to the self-consciously ‘typical’ musical lines for each voice type, even to the conventional audition arrangement of unspeaking pianist, seated authoritative listener and standing vocalist – as such the sound of the voice becomes a textual surface made up of the highly coded ‘language’ and signifiers of the operatic world, for Prospero and the knowing musical listener to hear, decode, interpret and understand.⁶⁵

Three singers are auditioned over the course of the opera, each of them a specific operatic type, their music displaying idiomatic characteristics of their respective ‘types’. The *Audizione I* is sung by a singer with a coloratura soprano technique; a number of passages within the aria are written with semiquaver runs, rapid dotted rhythmic patterns, as well as a range of ornaments. (Fig. 3.11)



Fig. 3.11

Audizione II, sung by a mezzo soprano, is an aria reminiscent of much of the ‘character’ writing for the mezzo soprano voice in operatic repertoire, with features such as long ‘rolling’ phrases often in triple time, set in a slow tempo, and placed in a tessitura that remains mostly between b_b' and b_b'' . (Fig. 3.12)

⁶⁵ In his short story Calvino describes this vocal ‘surface’ that the king encounters when he listens from is position of regal authority: ‘You have been present at many concerts in your honour on the dates of glorious anniversaries; every voice aware of being heard by the king takes on a cold enamel, a glassy smugness.’ Calvino, ‘A king listens’, 57.

Mezzosoprano
(Pianista 2)
Pianoforte
(sulla scena)

Oh not te gra ve.

im men sa, chia ra.

119

Fig. 3.12

Audizione III is written for a soprano voice, placing many of the sung gestures high in the singer's range, around g'', a'' and b'''. (Fig 3.13) These gestures are repeated in the aria, and followed by gestures that leap from heights of b'' down an octave and half, and back again in the space of three quavers. Such extreme writing frames the voice we hear as a self-conscious model of 'soprano-esque' singing, foregrounding the idiomatic codes of conventional opera, and the highly constructed vocal surface presented to the operatic listener.

Soprano 2

tat ta sul ma-re sul si len zio. Un vol to, un vol to pian ge il nul la. [a] la.

Fig. 3.13

Barthes' critique of such authoritarian structural listening can be found staged too within these auditions, as the singers' texts and indeed the musical writing appears to rupture these smooth diegetic, musical and vocal surfaces, and reject the authority of the listening Prospero. The first auditioning soprano appears to begin her aria with text similar to that being rehearsed previously by the Actor, but then turns and directly addresses Prospero, singing 'un letto e vuoto Prospero: la mia persona é mia' and 'la mia lingua e tace, il mio linguaggio e mio' (a bed is empty Prospero; my person is my own; and my tongue is silent,

my language is my own); the mezzo soprano sings ‘la mia bussoloa é mia’ (my compass is my own) and repeats the ‘é mia’ phrase three times; while the second soprano sings ‘la mia coscienza é mia’ (my will is my own), finishing with eight repetitions of ‘é mia’. While the text of the arias is made up of various fragments from Auden’s poem *The Sea and the Mirror*, each of them contains the repeated refrain ‘é mia’, meaning ‘is mine’, as the singers appear to turn on Prospero and reclaim their voices, their will and their autonomy for themselves. This ambiguity of roles and modes of address disrupts the diegetic outlines of the audition situation, making it unclear if these singers are rehearsing an aria, or addressing Prospero’s own inner thoughts directly. Alongside the text, their voices slip in and out of these diegetic roles, from the depersonalised, idiomatic sound of their typical voice types, suddenly to the voices of women expressing their separateness and autonomy from Prospero’s authoritative structural listening. Musically, this rupture is reflected in a recurring five note pattern, what Arman Schwartz identifies as a ‘somewhat characterless, melodic theme’, that is associated with the phrase ‘é mia’ in the singers’ texts.⁶⁶ The motif is built on five notes f♯, f♯, e♭, d♯ and a♯, circling down through the f♯, f♯ and d♯ before leaping an interval of a ninth to e♭”, falling back down to a♯, and in some cases closing the circle back on the f♯. It appears starkly in the first audition on the words ‘la mia lingua tace’ (my tongue is silent) followed by the assertion ‘il mio linguaggio e mio’ (my language is my own). (Fig. 3.14)

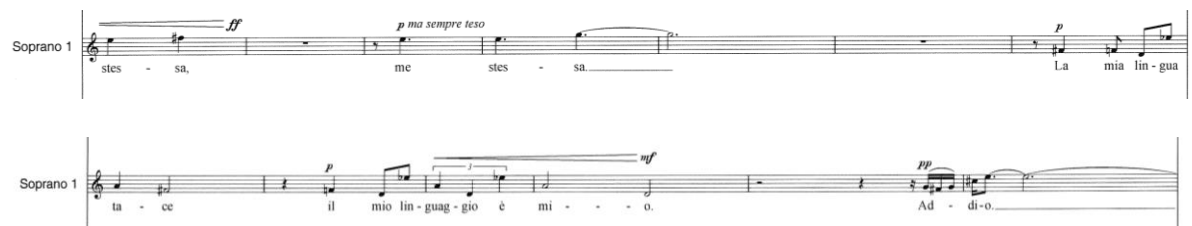


Fig. 3.14

It appears in the second audition, with some elongation and repetition. (Fig. 3.15)

⁶⁶ Schwartz, ‘Prospero’s Isle’, 94.

M. S. *4 accel.* *f* = 112 *p* = 94 *3*
 guar - da - no al - tro - ve, Pro - spe - ro. La mia bus - so - la

Pf. *3* *4* *5* *4*
 è mi - a, la mi - a bus - so - la è mi - a, è mi - a.

Fig. 3.15

The third audition expands the phrase with some inserted notes but maintains the basic cell outline. (Fig. 3.16)

Soprano 2 *f* *pp* *ff*
 tat - ta sul ma-re e sul si - len - zio. Un vol - to, un vol - to pian - ge il nul - la, [a] la -

Soprano 2 *f* *p* *ff*
 mi - a co - [o] - scien - za, la mi - a co - scien - za è mi - a, la mi - a co - scien - z

Fig. 3.16

Placed in the context of the melodic lines of the arias, these repetitive ‘slightly mechanical’ gestures stand out starkly from their surrounding music, puncturing the smooth ‘surface’ of the idiomatic vocal writing of the arias, asserting the sound of the voice in its capacities beyond simply the musical and linguistic texts of the opera, suggesting the presence of a will, a consciousness and a subjectivity with which every voice resonates.⁶⁷ Through these ruptures of the smooth operatic vocal surface, we catch glimpses of what Cavarero calls ‘the vocal sphere’, in which the ‘relational valence’ of the encounter between voice and

⁶⁷ Ibid., 94.

listener can be reconfigured and redrawn. The voice's inherent openness to multiple diffracted perceptions and readings here allows this oscillation to occur, sustaining this ambiguity between diverse modes of aesthetic encounter on the part of Prospero, and the listening audience.

This oscillation and ambiguity is reinforced in the Protagonista's climactic aria, the culmination of the three preceding auditions, and the end to Prospero's original search for 'un altro voce', outlined in his opening number. The female character appears in only one scene, for one aria, her name of Protagonista suggesting perhaps she is the leading lady of Prospero's impending production, but reflecting too the ambiguity of *Un re in ascolto*'s narrative and plot, suggesting she is a figure onto whom can be projected any number of readings or archetypes. Her anonymity resonates with the unnamed female figures of other modernist operatic works such as the 'She' of Schoenberg's *Erwartung*, the extended depiction of a single moment of an unnamed woman's extreme psychological experience, or even the multi-faceted heroine of Berg's *Lulu*, whose 'real' name we never learn. Described in the score as 'a survivor [...] dressed in rags', Theodor Vogt comments that she is perhaps 'the survivor of a vocal culture that has outlived its usefulness'; certainly she recalls the figure of 'Lei' from Berio's earlier *Passaggio*; perhaps having survived her previous ordeal, she returns to the operatic stage once again to reject the repressive structures of opera's possessive, reductive listening.⁶⁸

Be that as it may, the voice of the Protagonista stands out as a site on which the ambiguity and dissolution of the relative subject positions, between listener and vocalist, is played out; embedded firmly in the orchestral, technical and musical idiom of classical opera, the voice nevertheless shrugs off these structural frameworks through the continual eruption of the 'é mia' theme through the musical fabric, and the disintegration of her vocal technique. The aria is one of the most lyrically written pieces of *Un re in ascolto*, and the only one with a full orchestral accompaniment in the manner of a traditional lyric opera. The opening bars are reminiscent of a prima donna's grand aria with its opening flourish on a high b \flat " and the quasi recitative writing, while the phrasing of the opening measures is rolling and lyrical, recalling the smooth melodic lines of traditional operatic arias. The quintessentially idiomatic opening phrase is built on a steplike melody, with quite conventional one note per syllable word setting, and featuring acciacatura

⁶⁸ Vogt, 'Listening as a Letter of Uriah', 184.

ornamentation, a staple technique of the classical singer. The phrase builds in an upward sweep spanning an octave and a half to climax on a virtuosic *bb*”, held over two bars, with a crescendo to fortissimo. (Fig. 3.17)

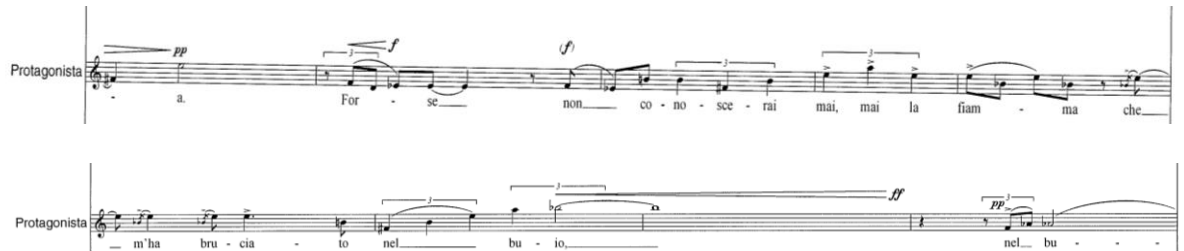


Fig. 3.17

As the aria progresses, more vocal gestures find their way in, undermining the quintessential bel canto sound and technique of the opening measures. As the voice begins to reject the classical operatic idiom, we hear a sung phrase become stuck on a repeated note, and transformed into a harsh rattling sound before dissolving into a guttural vocal gasp. The syllables too are transformed from parts of words to meaningless repeated vowel sounds; the voice breaks through any textual and lyrical meaning to reveal its physical sonorous potential. These irruptions increase, as the line becomes more fragmented, and the vocal gestures range between sung, spoken and growled. (Fig. 3.18) The smooth operatic surface of the opening phrases is punctured and distorted by the increasingly violent irruptions of these unconventional vocal gestures, asserting the voice’s unruly ‘excess’ of meaning in the midst of these traditional operatic structures.

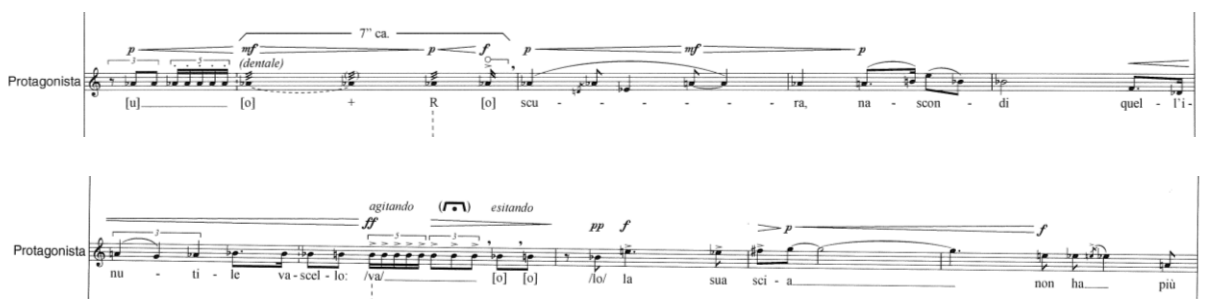


Fig. 3.18

This irruption of the voice's ungovernable presence into the musical text of classical opera can be heard too in the reiteration of the five note 'é mia' theme; it appears in its complete form, circling around and repeating itself on the words 'la mia voce é mia' (my voice is my own).⁶⁹ (Fig. 3.19) We hear it as an expansive leap over an octave and a semitone, an unvarnished vocal gesture, not particularly decorative or even difficult, standing out in contrast against the aria's surrounding virtuosic flourishes. Its mantra-like repetition sounds like an emphatic rejection of these surrounding operatic structures, presenting the voice in its open, resonating potential for a different type of listening encounter.



Fig. 3.19

Of course to read, or hear, an assertion of the Protagonista's autonomy from the recurring 'é mia' theme, from her vocal writing and her ambiguous narrative identity is to encounter a fundamental contradiction at play in *Un re in ascolto*, that is, the engagement with the structural parameters of the classical operatic form in order to critique and undermine those very forms. As Björn Heile writes of this problem,

An opera that rhetorically renounces opera, while deriving its considerable attraction and fascination from operatic conventions and techniques. As contradictions go, it's an interesting one, and, ironically, one that is rather typical of the aporias of an inherently problematic genre.⁷⁰

From the narrative and musical structure of the work, to the very types of listening that the piece intends to portray, *Un re* relies on the erudite musical listener's knowledge and capacity for the apperception and recognition of operatic conventions and musical forms in order to subvert and reject them. The 'é mia' theme, for instance, woven through the auditions and featuring prominently in the Protagonista's final aria, asserts and underscores the singers' textual claims to autonomy from Prospero's reductive structural listening; such thematicity and indeed semantic, representative function relies entirely on

⁶⁹ Schwartz, 'Prospero's Isle', 94-5.

⁷⁰ Heile, 'Prospero's death', 7.

its relationship to the musical structures and codes in which it is embedded for its recognition. Arman Schwartz presents this inherent paradox as ‘an ironic double function – both asserting and undermining the Protagonista’s independence’, while Robert Adlington suggests, rather, that ‘the result it would seem is a work where music and scenario are fundamentally at odds.’⁷¹ The scenario in which Prospero searches for a form of ‘new’ listening, in the mode of Barthes’ third type ‘emancipatory’ listening seems to be undone by the score-based, musically cognisant ‘readings’ that *Un re in ascolto*’s music and dramaturgy invites. As Adlington writes

The fact remains that Berio asks us to listen to his score as Prospero would wish to: confident in our capacity to master our surroundings; affirming a fixed signified – namely the structural interrelationships which the musical sounds are expected to signify – as a means to bolster the integrity and autonomy of the self.⁷²

What does this mean then for the sound of the voice in *Un re in ascolto*? Just as the work’s staging of critique and autonomy from hegemonic musical structures are nonetheless embedded firmly within the pages and codes of the written score, the voice that is heard surely retains its status as yet another operatic ‘text’, constructed of the signifiers of an operatic culture it claims to reject. Yet the Protagonista’s song, embedded though its words and music are in the structural weft of an operatic aria, gestures towards something in the voice that exceeds such parameters, the inherent ‘excess’ of meaning offered by a voice that is heard ‘*qua* voice’; Calvino in his short story explains that what one hears is ‘not that song, which you must have heard all too many times, not that woman, whom you have never seen: [but] that voice as a voice, as it offers itself in song.’⁷³

The voices that are heard in *Un re in ascolto* offer themselves as sites on which to play out the various types of listening that Barthes outlines; the indexical, territorial listening to backstage chatter, rehearsals, practice, murmurs, shouts, and conversations, all half heard and reassuring of the normal functioning of an opera house; the structural listening to operatic technique, vocal type, delivery of words and musical text on which the realisation of the opera, whether Prospero’s *Tempest* or Berio’s *Un re in ascolto*, relies; and also the ‘new’ listening, an openness of listening attitude to the meanings that resonate beyond these frameworks, to the voice beyond the stage, the character, the theatre, into the life,

⁷¹ Adlington, ‘The crises of sense’, 13.

⁷² Ibid., 17.

⁷³ Calvino, ‘A king listens’, 53.

experience and living presence of a fellow human subject. These simultaneous planes of engagement and understanding that the voice presents attest to its inherent ‘openness’ to multiple readings, allowing it to accommodate the various contradictions, ‘aporias’ and paradoxes presented by Berio’s work, even as, in Arman Schwartz’s words ‘it forever exceeds this role, contradicting notions of identity and unity.’⁷⁴

Perhaps *Un re in ascolto*’s most successful depiction of the voice’s ‘openness’ to third type, ‘modern’ listening appears not in the auditions or the Protagonista’s aria, but in the figure of the Mime, a sympathetic, apparently silent figure who shadows Prospero throughout the opera. The Duetto III, in which the Actor and Mime play out a parody of Prospero’s earlier duet with the Director, is scored for two performers, the Actor’s declamation and the Mime’s expressive silence framing the interplay of their two ‘voices’, as the text appears to play on the ambiguity of subject positions described by Barthes as a feature of ‘third’ type listening. (Fig. 3.20)

I imagined a silence [...]
 You imagined he is alone
 You said, I said [...]
 I said, you imagined...
 Where am I? I am here [...]
 You think. I am lost.
 Perhaps to lose oneself is to find oneself.⁷⁵

The figure shows a musical score for two characters, Venerdi and Mimo. Venerdi's part is written on a staff with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a common time signature (C). The lyrics for Venerdi are: "Tu dicevi. Io pensavo. Tu dicevi che c'è tanta agitazione. Io pensavo a un silenzio. Tu dicevi che c'è". Above the staff, there is a tempo/mood marking: "(con umorismo)". Mimo's part is represented by a line of text below Venerdi's: "Con grazia malinconica mima le risposte di Prospero e imita i gesti di Venerdi." The text is enclosed in a box.

Fig. 3.20

Here, the Mime’s listening takes on the interpolatory ‘voice’ that resonates in what Barthes describes as ‘an intersubjective space where ‘I am listening’ also means ‘listen to me’’.⁷⁶ His

⁷⁴ Schwartz, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 101.

⁷⁵ Io pensavo ad un silenzio.../ Tu pensavi ch'è solo./Tu dicevi, io dicevo.../ Io dicevo. tu pensavi.../ Dove sono? Sono qua.../ Tu pensi. Mi perdo. / Forse questo perdersi e trovarsi.

⁷⁶ Barthes, ‘Listening’, 246.

silence is presented not as an absence of sound or expression, but rather a site on which to construct meaning, an intersubjective space that resonates with myriad potential readings. His silence, to paraphrase another French philosopher of music Vladimir Jankélévitch, can be heard not as the ‘untellable, but the *ineffable*’: the untellable he describes as ‘unable to be spoken of, then, because it there is absolutely nothing to say, rendering us mute, overwhelming reason, transfixing human discourse, while the ineffable by contrast contains ‘infinite and interminable things to be said of it [...] thanks to its properties of fecundity and inspiration.’⁷⁷ The distinction here is between ‘a negative that is unsayable to a positive that is ineffable [...] between silence that is mute, throttled, and silence that is tacit.’⁷⁸

The Mime, in a reversal of the role of his Shakespearean cousin Ariel, who is invisible but audible, here can be seen, but heard only by Prospero; his silence poised in expectation of expression, communication and understanding.⁷⁹ He is present, listening closely, during Prospero’s opening aria in which he sings of his wish to find ‘un altro voce’, a different voice to all the voices that surround him; while at the end of the opera it is the mime ‘that has the last word in the opera’, his gestures expressing pity and sorrow over a dying Prospero, as Prospero sings

There is a voice, hidden among the voices,
Hidden in the silence [...]
The sound of the voice
A memory in shadows,
A memory of the future.⁸⁰

In the Mime’s redolent silence perhaps lies this voice, ‘hidden among the voices’, that Prospero searches for; the open voice that asks the listener to engage with, collaborate and ultimately create from his own experience and understanding the voice that resonates in the shared intersubjective space between listening and vocalising individuals. In answer

⁷⁷ Vladimir Jankélévitch, *Music and the ineffable*, trans. Carolyn Abbate (Princeton, N.J.; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2003), 72.

⁷⁸ Jankélévitch, *Music and the ineffable*, 73

⁷⁹ Mila, ‘A true opera’.

⁸⁰ C’e una voce, nascosta fra le voci, nascosta nel silenzio... / Il buio nella voce / il ricordo in penumbra / Un ricordo al futuro.

to Prospero's earlier wish that his theatre 'could contain listening in all its forms', his Director responds that 'only the desire to hear opens the ear'. The Mime embodies this ultimate responsibility on the part of the receiver for the voice she hears; a mute reminder of Prospero's inability to move beyond his operatic kingdom of second type structural listening, to collaborate with the potentially open voices all around him.

Conclusion

In *Un re in ascolto* then, we find a maturation and thoughtfulness that contrasts with the revolutionary idealism of *Passaggio*, of twenty years before; what the works share however is the centrality of the open voice, its multi-layered ambiguity enfolded into the musical and dramatic construction of each work, in very different ways. Here we find the open voice not just in the service of a further narrative or dramatic theme, but forming the very subject matter of the opera itself, questioning and exploring the multiple different 'voices' that one can encounter on the operatic stage. Here the operatic voice has been subject to unflinching dissection as part of this deliberate and thoughtful examination of the materials of opera, exposing its multi-layered and excessive nature, not easily containable by technical operatic demands. As the piece poses complex and difficult questions about the nature of intersubjective communication, expression, and authority in the artwork, the Protagonista ultimately presents her voice as the expressive 'ideal' to which Prospero aspires, while paradoxically rejecting the authority of the passive listener, the composer, even the edifice of operatic culture. We hear throughout the opera the open voice at play, itself a potential labyrinth of almost infinite referential links, resonating in the space created by the receiver's mode of listening, of his choice of collaboration and understanding. In this reflective mid-career work, *Un re in ascolto* shows us the open voice as it resonates between one individual and another; the later chamber work *Altra Voce* (1999) delves even further into the complex intersections between the voice, interiority, and subjective 'selfhood'. As Prospero set out in *Un re in ascolto* his search for 'un altro voce', a different voice, here in *Altra Voce* we can begin to hear the multiple different voices that resonate within the parameters of the open voice. Through close study of the score, and my performance of the work, Chapter 4 will examine the open voice as a feature

of my own individual experience, in the interplay between the voice inside my own head, and the voice I sent out into the world, and how these are performed in Berio's *Altra Voce*.

Chapter 4

‘Come. Open your eyes. Listen... I hear another voice’: The open voice, time, and memory in *Altra Voce* (1990)

The passage of time and its fundamental role in how we hear and understand the voice lie at the heart of the deceptively simple chamber piece *Altra Voce*, a 1999 work consisting simply of an alto flute, a solo mezzo soprano voice, and the application of live electronic processes.¹ Through the use of live sampling, the piece effectively bends and folds back the linear trajectory of musical time, stepping ‘out of time’ to create a polyphony of past, present and future voices that relies on time, memory and anticipation for its musical structure. The work’s crystalline construction offers the scholar of voice a clear view of the complex, intricate architecture of the myriad ‘voices’ it evokes, such as the resonating external voice of song and speech, the interior voice of one’s own body, the voice as it is heard in time and memory, and the paradoxical, reverberating intersections between all of these. As such the piece offers a clear demonstration of the open voice, in its prismatic diffraction of the sound of the solo voice into an infinitude of constituent layers, aspects and forms. The work has an accessibility that makes it amenable to study not just through the perusal of its score or by listening, but also through the act of its performance. As part of my research into the open voice in the

¹ ‘Luciano Berio: *Altra Voce*’, *Universal Edition* [website] <<http://www.universaledition.com/Altra-voce-Luciano-Berio/composers-and-works/composer/54/work/1111>> accessed 1st June 2015.

music of Berio, *Altra Voce*'s intimacy and economy of means allowed me to perform it in recital, as the mezzo soprano in an ensemble of voice, flute and electronics, in a performance which formed part of a musical research and practice study day.² Performing *Altra Voce* allowed me to research and observe from the inside, the numerous 'incarnations' of voice that inhabit the work, and to explore their peculiar interaction with my own 'inner' experience of voice, memory and time.

Forty years after the radical experimentation of a young generation of musicians and composers with the electronic techniques made available by the tape machines and oscillators of the Studio RAI in Milan, Berio was still exploring ways in which developments in computer technology could help to realise his musical ideas, though both the technologies, and the ideas, had changed markedly in the intervening decades. 1999 saw the premieres of two companion pieces, the chamber work *Altra Voce*, which had been developed from the 'azione musicale' or opera *Cronaca del Luogo*, a large scale work that marshalled full orchestral and choral forces alongside live electronic techniques to create a literal 'wall' of diffuse pulsating voices.³ Earlier tape works such as *Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)* (1958) and *Visage* (1961) used new studio technologies to manipulate recordings of the sounding voice, in a process of complete fragmentation and defamiliarisation that critiqued and subverted traditional notions of vocal beauty and technique in classical music composition and performance; these 1999 works, from the later part of Berio's career, suggest a more reflective agenda, as computer electronics are used subtly to complement the live performance of conventional operatic singing voices, rather than distort or fragment them.⁴

Chapters 2 and 3 demonstrated how the voice's inherent multivalency, its openness to a variety of forms, constructions and understandings, is framed in the earlier stage works *Passaggio* and *Un re in ascolto*; indeed, both works can be seen to rely on this prismatic

² This performance of *Altra Voce* was part of a recital programme of musical works performed by staff members of the Edinburgh Napier University department of music, which included the presentation of newly composed works, improvisations, and pre-composed canonic works. The recital, on the September 2nd, 2015, provided a forum for a number of research-performances, offering me alongside fellow musicians and researchers a valuable space for discussion and consideration of musicological questions in a performative context.

³ Luciano Berio, 'Luciano Berio: Cronaca del Luogo', *Centro Studi* [website] <<http://www.lucianoberio.org/luciano-berio-cronaca-del-luogo-eng?62182044=1>> accessed 8th August, 2016.

⁴ David Osmond-Smith, *Berio* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 78.

capacity of the human voice to maintain their thematic complexity and ambiguity. In *Passaggio* the open voice invokes the hegemonic voice of a civic or political body placed in counterpoint to the particularity and frailty of a sounding individual human body; *Un re in ascolto*, in its turn, considers the multitude of sounding, singing and performative voices of the opera house tradition, in their potential aesthetic and interpersonal capacities. These voices resonate in the cultural and physical spaces of the theatre, recital room or auditorium, in the world external to the bodies from which they emerge. But what of the voice as it is heard by each individual, in the interiority of their own bodily, lived experience? How does the model of the 'open voice', this shifting, multivalent site of collaborative meaning construction between vocalist and 'receiver' offer an account of the voice experienced as 'inner monologue', or as the voice generated within our bodies that bridges the seemingly discrete and separate territories of physical interiority and outside world? What of the curious interaction of the seemingly 'live' voice of speech, song and performance with the passage of time, and with its construction in the memory of the listener?

To answer these questions, this chapter will examine how the open voice is staged and demonstrated in this late Berio work *Altra Voce*. The piece grew from the musical and aesthetic ideas in its 'parent' work *Cronaca del Luogo*, which explicitly foregrounds themes of temporality in its particular staging of ancient historical texts, and their invocation of the passage of time as they intersect with the punctual particularity of 'live' vocal performance. This temporal dimension is played out on a number of levels, from overarching cultural memory that stretches back through centuries and is transmitted between generations, to the construction of meaning in a listener's memory in the specific instants of a live vocal performance. These themes emerge and are played out in my performance of *Altra Voce*, as the memory embedded in ancient textual fragments is folded into the temporal framework of my own, live, punctual performance of the piece. This proved an invaluable means of studying the intricate interplay of different 'voices' that inhabit the work, and showing how these multiple voices in fact derive from a single voice; as such, my performance of the work was an expanded demonstration of the open voice, showing once again the voice not as a singular voice-object, but as a multivalent gestalt in which numerous vocal aspects continuously interact.

In studying the work's score, and exploring my experience of performing *Altra Voce*, I will examine how the human voice is shown as quintessentially 'open' in form, displayed in a number of seemingly paradoxical, separate, and yet simultaneous 'voices'. As the piece uses computer technology to dissect and manipulate the conventionally fixed parameters of a classical music performance such as linear musical time and the location of sound in space, it provides an ideal forum in which to observe the voice's complex construction within these temporal and spatial frameworks. In order to examine and articulate the complexities of the voice's interaction with time, memory, and human interiority, I draw on the work of Jacques Derrida, whose philosophical work in exploring the interactions of writing, communication, voice and interiority has had profound resonances in the fields of literary and critical theory since the 1960s. Less well-explored, however, have been the implications of his work for the study of the voice and vocal performance in musicology, or in the context of the seismic reconsiderations of the human voice and listening that have been taking place across the humanities and sciences in recent years. In my study of the open voice in Berio's *Altra Voce*, I thus draw on Derrida's considerations of the human voice, to highlight and articulate multiple different aspects of the performing voice in music, and to consider their complex and at times paradoxical interactions.

Practice-based research

Altra Voce presents the listener with an array of 'voices', enfolding the inherent 'openness' of the voice into the very material and structure of the piece. Through the conscious incorporation of the contingencies and particularities of a single performer's voice in each instance of performance into the very fabric of the work, *Altra Voce* presents us as listeners with a complex study of the multiple layers and incarnations present within the voice. Through the application of real time sampling processes, the 'live' voice is recorded, truncated, manipulated and replayed within the temporal flow of a 'live' performance, offering a fundamental critique of listeners' assumptions around the links between voice, temporal 'liveness', and the intra- and inter-subjective experiences of 'selfhood'.

To observe this multiplicity of voices within *Altra Voce*, the analytic approach I took to the musical material of the work was based on the listening experience arising from one specific live performance of it; in order to experience the voice in *Altra Voce* as both an externally resonating, and as an interior, subjective phenomenon, I took the part of the mezzo soprano in the piece's performance. This chapter's analysis of the work is drawn then from both a reflection on the printed score, and also from my experience of its realisation as a listening performer, the better to 'hear' the multi-layered, polyphonic texture to its fullest extent. This methodology of siting oneself, as analyst, 'inside' a piece of music through musical practice and performance is one that is gaining ever greater attention within the field of musical scholarship, offering as it does a renewed variety of perspectives from which to approach questions of music research. Anders Førisdal, in his discussion in 2015 of his own experience as analyst-performer of a number of works by Brian Ferneyhough, observed

Speaking from within a musical practice, the voice of the performer can shed new light on well-known phenomena [...] the privileged position of the performer-analyst offers a bifurcating perspective whose position from within the score, within the process of musical realization itself, might offer new insight.⁵

In the case of *Altra Voce*, the activity of performing the piece enabled me to observe and analyse the complex play of voices from a number of listening perspectives. While the resulting CD recording, included as an appendix to this thesis, presents an audio 'snapshot' of the contingencies of one specific performance, it is not intended as an ontologically discrete (re)creation of Berio's *Altra Voce* in its own right; the recording forms a documentary trace of the performance event, and serves as an accompanying illustration to some points of this chapter's analysis.

Chapter 4's move into 'practice-based research' reflects a wider turn in recent decades in the research methodologies and philosophies adopted within the arts, humanities and social sciences, and more latterly within musicological research, towards reflection and analysis sited or informed by the 'performance' of an artwork, in this case a musical composition, rather than basing analysis solely on a textual reading of the piece. Nicholas Cook discusses

⁵ Anders Førisdal, 'Radically idiomatic instrumental practice in works by Brian Ferneyhough', in eds. Erling E. Guldbrandsen and Julian Johnson, *Transformations of musical modernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 279.

this methodological and ideological shift in the context of music scholarship as occurring largely since the 1990s, with musicology ironically resistant to what he terms the ‘performative turn’ that had characterised literary and performance studies since the 1970s; the reason for this he attributed to musicology’s disciplinary and cultural roots in nineteenth century studies of language and text, arguing ‘if you think of performance as in essence reproduction of a text, then you cannot think of it as a primary mode of signification’.⁶ A challenge to the centrality of the musical ‘work’ and its text to the study of music came in the 1990s with books such as Lydia Goehr’s *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (1992) and Christopher Small’s *Musicking* (1998), and since then, Cook marks a rise in the number of researchers employing performance as both a tool for the structural analysis of music, and as itself the focus of analysis.⁷ It is worth noting at this point that practice or musical performance as a method of research encompasses an extremely wide field, of repertoire, of research questions and of methodology. As Cook writes ‘Even within music, practice as research ranges from performance and composition to instrument design and other applications of technology, sound recording and production, software design, education, and therapy or other relational practices’; a brief overview of recently published collections of projects and perspectives based on the practice of music as a research methodology reflects this breadth and variety of approaches, and of results.⁸

The collection in which Cook’s essay appears features various contributions towards the debate on the disciplinary boundaries of this approach, and reflects the variety of applications of musical practice-as-research, from Cook’s citation of Janet Schmalfeldt’s analytical reappraisals of issues of ‘form’, through her own performance, of such mainstays of nineteenth century piano repertoire as Beethoven’s ‘Bridgetower’ sonata, Op.47, or Schubert’s piano sonata Op. 42⁹, to Jane Davidson’s reflections on her own experiences as an opera director to

⁶ Nicholas Cook, 2015, ‘Performing Research: Some Institutional Perspectives’, in Mine Doğanatan-Dack, ed. *Artistic Practice as Research in Music: Theory, Criticism, Practice*, (London: Routledge, 2015), online edition, 65.2/780.

⁷ Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); Christopher Small, *Musicking : the meanings of performing and listening*, (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1998).

⁸ Cook, ‘Performing Research’, 60.0/780.

⁹ Ibid., 69.8/780; see Janet Schmalfeldt, *In the process of becoming : analytic and philosophical perspectives on form in early nineteenth-century music*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011)

illustrate the value and research potential of musical auto-ethnography.¹⁰ Recent years have seen too the series of conferences *Music and/as Process* grow in size and scope since its instigation in 2013, with its associated collection of proceedings and articles published in 2016, reflecting more on the performance of contemporary and avant-garde repertoire, as well as on practice as itself a mode of composition.¹¹ Within this collection is a variety of methodological approaches, all within the remit of research through musical practice, with articles such as Ellen Hooper's focus on the recorded performances of a particular Berio song by different interpreters,¹² or Vanessa Hawes' survey into the experience of a novice singer's learning process of a Schoenberg song, by means of interview and observation.¹³ Lauren Redhead employs the experiences of her own performance of works of graphic notation for organ and electronics by other composers, to reflect on the interrelationships of composition and performance in the ontology of the 'work concept', in the specific instances of each work's (re)creation.¹⁴ Above all, these collections confirm the array of research questions and approaches suggested by the concept of musical practice as a valid research activity; as Redhead writes in her introduction, it is a concept with potential relevance to,

those working in process music, new music, composition, interdisciplinary issues, performance studies, aesthetics and the philosophy of music, music analysis, multimedia and creative arts research...The perspective is from the inside, the reflections are based on experience, and the possibilities are exciting. The range and breadth of perspectives presented [...] give rise to surprising connections, often at the philosophical level.¹⁵

¹⁰ Jane W Davidson, 'Practice-based Music Research: Lessons from a Researcher's Personal History', in Mine Doğan-tan-Dack, ed. *Artistic Practice as Research in Music: Theory, Criticism, Practice* (London: Routledge, 2015).

¹¹ Lauren Redhead and Vanessa Hawes, eds. *Music and/as Process* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016).

¹² Ellen Hooper, 'Performing Transformations (a Risky Approach)', in eds. Lauren Redhead, and Vanessa Hawes, *Music and/as Process* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 80-96.

¹³ Vanessa Hawes, 'Perception of Structure as a Learning Process in a Schoenberg Song', in eds. Lauren Redhead and Vanessa Hawes, *Music and/as Process* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 56 – 79.

¹⁴ Lauren Redhead, 'Notation as Process: Interpretation of Open Scores and the 'Journey Form'', in eds. Lauren Redhead and Vanessa Hawes, *Music and/as Process* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 116-134.

¹⁵ Lauren Redhead and Vanessa Hawes, 'Introduction', in eds. Lauren Redhead and Vanessa Hawes, *Music and/as Process*, (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 4 – 5.

The use of musical practice to reflect closely on philosophical concepts and critiques, and how their complexity is demonstrated and played out through musical form, can be found too in recent work by Alistair Zaldua and Anders Førisdal.¹⁶ Zaldua discusses the enactment of the theories of multivocality and translation of Jacques Derrida through the structure and creation of his audio-visual installation *Leiden Translations* (2014) stating that his aim for the installation was ‘that the processes of sonification of an arcane text, and the visualisation of the layers of translation presented, should be clearly perceived as musical processes.’¹⁷ Zaldua links the ambiguity of meaning and comprehension that emerges from this ‘sonification’ with what Derrida describes as ‘a semiotic of decentred transformations’, illustrating his view of writing and translation as a ‘constantly transformed and transformative activity.’¹⁸ Førisdal, too, draws on his own experience of performing two pieces by Brian Ferneyhough, *Unity Capsule* for flute (1975) and *Kurze Schatten II* for guitar (1988) to explore and articulate ideas of ‘radically idiomatic’ practice incorporated into musical composition at a structural level; he relates the resultant ‘double reading’, the simultaneous composition and performance specificity of the work, to Jacques Derrida’s critique of presence, arguing that

For Derrida, the critique of presence is always a critique of metaphysics and the notion of the transcendental signifier. I will suggest reading the materially-founded instrumental practice found in Ferneyhough’s work along the same lines as this critique of presence.¹⁹

Jacques Derrida

In the case of both Førisdal and Zaldua, they draw successfully on the philosophical work of Jacques Derrida to illuminate aspects of their performance-based analysis and research. In

¹⁶ Alistair Zaldua, ‘Translations as Paradigm and Process for Pre-Composition in *Leiden Translations* Installation and Film’, eds. Lauren Redhead and Vanessa Hawes, *Music and/as Process* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2016), 173-193; Førisdal, ‘Radically idiomatic instrumental practice’, 279-97.

¹⁷ Zaldua, ‘Translation as Paradigm and Process’, 173.

¹⁸ Jacques Derrida, ‘Roundtable on Translation’, in eds. Claude Levesque and Christie McDonald, *The ear of the other: Otobiography, Transference, Translation. Texts and Discussion with Jacques Derrida* (New York: Schocken Books, 1988), 100, cit. in Zaldua, ‘Translation as Paradigm and Process’, 185.

¹⁹ Førisdal, ‘Radically idiomatic instrumental practice’, 282.

this chapter too, I looked to the writings of the French philosopher to find a theoretical framework through which to approach the questions of voice, self, and the experience of time that a performance of Berio's *Altra Voce* continually poses. To support an analysis of the complex interactions and myriad 'voices' played out in Berio's piece, I draw on Derrida's seminal work of critique of the phenomenology of 'self-presence', published in 1967, *Voice and Phenomenon*. The conceptual schema offered by Derrida in considering the experience of hearing both one's own voice, and the voice of another, shows up a series of bifurcations that occur in our readings and understandings of the voice, or voices, that we hear in vociferation, and in musical performance, leading us to observe that rather than a singular sounding voice linked with the discrete 'self' of a performer, in fact what we can hear is a multiplicity of voices at play. *Altra Voce* provides a forum in which, through the musical and compositional structure of the piece, these different voices are deftly dissected and presented to the listener, illustrating the voice's inherent 'openness' to myriad readings and constructions in the resonating space between vocalist and listener.

Altra Voce takes the form of a chamber recital in the classical musical tradition, with a band of classically trained musicians performing in front of an audience of quiet, attentive listeners, and invokes all of the performing and listening conventions that this culture entails. This is especially true for how we hear and encounter the sounding voice in such a forum, as the piece presents, and subverts our listening assumptions. One powerful assumption on which the dramatic and emotional impact of much classical vocal music is predicated is that of a direct link between the voice and the 'self' of a person; in some way, live classical song suggests, the voice communicates something essential and truthful about a person's inner life, and indicates the presence of a self-conscious, feeling, thinking 'self' by the sound of their deliberate vocalising. As I explored in Chapter 1 when considering the links that are forged, and broken, by *Sequenza III*'s use of extended and innovative vocal techniques, the association of the sound of a voice with the identity of a unique individual is profoundly embedded in musical culture. It is a link that is perhaps more explicitly articulated in the field of popular music studies, or popular musicology; from Joseph Auner's discussion of the voice as an index of 'authentic human presence' to Nina Eidsheim's exploration of voice 'as a technology of

selfhood', popular music research underlines and explores the role of the sounding voice in the construction of a singer's persona and self-identity.²⁰

In *Voice and Phenomenon*, Derrida questions these culturally assumed links between the voice and the presence of a 'self'. He does this by means of a detailed critique of his forerunner Husserl's system of phenomenology, what the Derrida scholar Leonard Lawlor describes as 'the metaphysics of presence'.²¹ The basis of Derrida's argumentation lies in the consideration of *how* a person experiences his own internal voice, arguing that to 'hear' one's own voice is to experience it through time – meaning there must be a 'gap' between the self-who-vocalises, and the self-who-hears. In his introduction to a recent English translation of *Voice and Phenomenon*, Lawlor explains that,

By means of the argumentation we have seen (especially the argumentation from the medium of hearing-oneself-speak), [Derrida] demonstrates that the self-knowledge of the 'I am' is only apparent.²²

In a live musical performance, the apparent links between the voice and the 'self' of the performer are based on the appearance of temporal particularity – the voice is heard at a moment in time, shared by the vocalist and the listener, fleeting, punctual, temporary. In that moment, the vocalist apparently experiences her self-presence, her knowledge of the 'I am', through hearing the sound of her own voice internally; the listener is seemingly party to this exposition of the singer's 'self' through hearing her voice emerge into the shared physical space between them.

Derrida's argumentation in *Voice and Phenomenon* offers an intellectual framework in which to examine the role of the voice, and indeed, the multiple voices, as they are heard in *Altra Voce*. Using fragments of Derrida's theoretical work as a basis for analysis, this chapter explores how *Altra Voce* undermines classical music's cultural assumption of a unique, core 'self' linked to the sound of a voice. Through the use of recording and sampling techniques,

²⁰ See Chapter 1 of this thesis, 23-30

²¹ See Vernon W. Cisney, 'Historical Context', in *Derrida's Voice and Phenomenon* (Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 15-56.

²² Leonard Lawlor, 'Introduction', in Jacques Derrida, *Voice and phenomenon: introduction to the problem of the sign in Husserl's phenomenology*, trans. Leonard Lawlor (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2011), xxvii.

we can see how *Altra Voce* questions the idea of the ‘punctual instant’ of live music performance, as it highlights and disrupts the passage of musical time, and with it, the experience of the ‘voice-as-self’ of the vocal performer. In breaking this link between a ‘singular’ voice and the presence of a ‘self’, *Altra Voce* demonstrates how we can hear numerous different ‘voices’ generated within the space between vocalist and listener; how we hear, for instance, the ‘external’ resonating vocal sound of an other *and* the voice we construct through time, through memory and anticipation; how we hear our own ‘internal’ voice *and also* the voice we project out into the resonating space outside our bodies; or how we hear the linguistic sense that a voice conveys *and* the non-signifying, pre-linguistic vocal sound.

Approaching *Altra Voce* from the analytical perspective offered by Derrida’s theoretical work on ‘self-presence’ and the voice, we find a resonating polyphony of these diverse voices at play in the piece, again demonstrating the ‘open voice’ on which the work’s richness and complexity rests. This multiplicity attests to voice’s fundamental ‘openness’ to myriad readings and constructions, and to *Altra Voce*’s deliberate dissection and enfolding of these ‘voices’ into the musical material of the work.

***Altra Voce* (1999)**

Fifteen years after the premiere of *Un re in ascolto*, *Altra Voce* (1999) and the ‘azione musicale’ *Cronaca del Luogo* (1999) from which it developed, seem to betoken an even further introversion and thoughtfulness on the part of the composer, with works that explore the forms and fundamental parameters of traditional classical music, such as linear time and sonic space, while questioning the very limits of what can be said, in music, in voice, in text, or in performance. Paul Griffiths comments on this trajectory in his account of Berio’s later works, attributing an expressive ‘muteness’ to his music, in his view a kind of pessimism where

Music is now fathomless not so much because it is always susceptible to reinterpretation [...] as because what it should say is unsayable [...] This is the

expressive condition of much of Berio's later music, and not least of his last two operas, *Outis* (1995-6) and *la Cronanca del luogo* (1998-99).²³

Altra Voce is effectively a meditation on the sounding voice, and its relationship with time and memory. Here, in this 15-minute miniature chamber work, a fragment of Talia Pecker-Berio's libretto is set for a solo mezzo soprano voice, in dialogue with a single alto flute. The piece's text, drawn from one particular scene of *Cronaca del Luogo*, draws attention to the sounds being heard, the sound of air, wind, breath, and voice, of a trumpet or flute, the repeated 'quasi' (almost) after each instrument's name casting ambiguity around all of these sounds, just as the opening line (it is not day nor night) suggests a time 'out of time'.

It is not day nor night
 a trumpet sound, almost
 A flute sound, almost
 Of wind and voice
 Come.
 Open your eyes
 Listen
 The old man weeps
 Father and son
 They have fallen on the mountains
 I hear another voice.
 Come.²⁴

As with much of Berio's vocal composition, the text is elongated, truncated and fragmented in the course of the piece, so that semantic sense tends to emerge and disappear as it is overtaken by the sound of solitary phonemes and repeated syllables. *Altra Voce* explores how we hear, and construct memory through time; its crystalline chamber arrangement places the

²³ Paul Griffiths, *Modern Music and After*, 3rd Edn. (USA: Oxford University Press, 2010), 369.

²⁴ Non è giorno né notte / un suono di tromba, quasi / Un suono di flauto, quasi / Di voce e di vento / Vieni. / Apri gli occhi / Ascolta / Il vecchio piange / Padre e figlio / sono caduti sui monti / Sento un'altra voce. / Vieni. Talia Pecker-Berio, 'Text', in *Altra Voce: per flauto contralto, mezzosoprano e live electronics* (Wien: Universal Edition, 1999).

voice and the flute in almost ‘laboratory conditions’ to examine the most fundamental parameters of musical and vocal sound, that is, their resonance through time, and their construction and re-creation in memory.

Altra Voce is performed in a conventional recital set-up, presenting the singer and flautist on a stage facing a listening audience. Both voice and instrument are recorded through microphones, in fragments of varying lengths; the bars to be recorded are specified in the work’s score, as are the points in the piece at which they are to be replayed. These additional ‘lines’ are heard through the eight speakers arranged around the stage, and build up a polyphony of live and recorded ‘voices’. This folding back of the recorded vocal sound into the musical texture to interact harmonically with the live voice plays with our assumptions of the voice’s ‘liveness’; by interrupting the linear temporal flow of the voice, its capacity to convey linguistic and musical sense is disrupted, highlighting the role of time and memory in the listener’s construction of vocal meaning. The vocal sound is initially heard in unison with the flute, as both sound a sustained *f* which forms a central point of reference and return for the voice’s and flute’s melodic lines throughout the piece. By placing the voice alongside an instrument so timbrally similar to it as the alto flute, the piece opens up questions on the perceived ‘uniqueness’ of the vocal sound in music, and the assumed links between vocalising and human interiority and consciousness. The placing of the recorded and amplified vocal sound within the performance space using spatialized speakers also disrupts the customary mental links between a vocal sound and the resonating body from which it seems to emerge, playing on the listener’s usual conflation of a voice with the inner ‘self’ or subjectivity of a vocalist.

This study by no means suggests that Berio’s *Altra Voce* and *Cronaca del Luogo* are unique in their approach to the sounding voice via electronic technology in performance; from Stockhausen’s *Gesang der Jünglinge* in the 1950s to the electronic works of Berio’s countryman Luigi Nono in the 1980s, composers have found numerous ways to apply recording and amplification technology to questions of the voice’s relationship with time, with spatial location, with human subjectivity and apparent uniqueness, and with non-human timbral registers of sound. This concern with the dissolution of particularly ‘voice-like’ timbres into the spectrum of the purely instrumental can be found played out in works such as Nono’s 1986 piece *Omaggio a György Kurtág*, in which a mezzo soprano voice, flute and tuba are

electronically recorded, amplified and blended in the live performance, creating a soundscape in which 'sustained sounds [...] come from indiscernible sources, echoed by electronic noise, then meld and fade into heavy silences'.²⁵ A similar exploration of the disputed territories of uniquely 'human' and specifically 'vocal' sound can be found for instance in Brian Ferneyhough's *Time and Motion Study II* completed in 1976, which uses electronics, albeit in a much simpler form than *Tempo Reale*'s later innovations, to combine the sounds of the cello and the human voice into an array of hybridised 'new' sounds. Here the cellist is called upon to vocalise as she plays, disrupting the normally clear culturally defined boundaries between classical vocalist, instrumentalist, and indeed what constitutes acceptable 'musical' sound. The sounds of the cello and voice are passed through a ring modulator which distorts and 'collides' the extreme ends of the voice's and cello's wavelength spectrum, creating a new combination of 'real' and electronically produced sound that musicologist Martin Iddon identifies as 'a combined cyborg identity', tracing a continuum between identifiably 'human' and machine generated musical timbres and gestures.²⁶ The profound intersection of the human voice with time, memory and human identity is found too in works such as Jonathan Harvey's *Mortuos Plango, Vivos Voco* (1980) or Morton Feldman's *Three Voices* (1982). Harvey's piece for eight track recorder is intended to be performed octophonically, placing the listener 'inside' a soundscape created of eight separate speakers arranged in a cube formation; it consists of the electronically manipulated recordings of the tenor bell of Winchester cathedral, overlaid on the sound of his son's voice who was a chorister in the cathedral at this time. The piece's title (The dead I lament, the living I call), derived from a prayer inscribed on the bell, points to the complex interplay of historical time, personal memory and experience, and the powerful implication of human life that the sound of a voice evokes.²⁷ Feldman's *Three Voices*, composed in 1981 for Joan Le Barbara, consists of a trio between the 'live' voice of the onstage soloist alongside two recordings of the same singer's voice, projected through two large onstage speakers. Here too, the imagery of the voice's quintessential aliveness is played against the past memory of the recorded voices, the text of

²⁵ 'Luigi Nono // Helmut Lachenmann // Clara Iannotta: Presentation', *Festival d'Automne de Paris* [website], <<http://www.festival-automne.com/en/edition-2014/luigi-nono-helmut-lachenmann-clara-iannotta-omaggio-gyorgy-kurtag>> accessed 23rd October 2016; 'Omaggio a György Kurtág (1983)', *Ressources.IRCAM*, [website], <<http://brahms.ircam.fr/works/work/18843/>>, accessed 23rd October, 2016.

²⁶ Martin Iddon, 'On the entropy circuit: Brian Ferneyhough's *Time and Motion Study II*', *Contemporary Music Review*, 25/1-2 (2006), 93.

²⁷ Simon Emmerson, *Living electronic music* (Hants, England; Burlington, Vt.: Ashgate, 2007), 157.

the piece and even the stage arrangement intended as an opposition of present and past, life and death; as Feldman himself commented 'there is something kind of tombstone about the look of loudspeakers. I thought of the piece as an exchange of the live voice with the dead ones – a mixture of the living and the dead.'²⁸

Following in the path of these previous mediations on the human voice, and its interaction with temporal presence, memory and location, *Altra Voce* uses the sparse arrangement of one voice, one instrument, and 'live' electronics to dissect a number of different 'voices' at play in the moment of musical performance; for instance, the 'interior' voice of subjective intention, the disembodied, resonating 'external' voice in the performance space, the remembered voice in the listener's memory constructing meaning through time, *Altra Voce* demonstrates the open voice, displaying this multitude of simultaneous 'voices', and inviting the listener to negotiate her own path of understanding through this complex polyphony.

A similar preoccupation with time and memory is writ large in the opera from which *Altra Voce* was developed, the 'azione musicale' *Cronaca del Luogo*; the opera plays out these ideas on a scale of generations and centuries, invoking cultural texts that echo through millennia of human culture and memory, while the chamber piece telescopes these vast swathes of time into a contemplation of the precise, specific and momentary perception of time in a vocal performance. Considering *Altra Voce* in the context of its larger 'parent' work highlights the complexities of listening and understanding voice through time, and of the vastly differing scales of time that can be enfolded within the punctual moment of a vocal utterance.

***Cronaca del Luogo* (1999)**

Cronaca del Luogo frames a preoccupation with the interaction of time and memory with the particularities of sounding voices and instruments in a punctual present, here shown in the

²⁸ Cit. in Griffiths, *Modern music and after*, 281; Joan La Barbara, 'A Reflection on the Genesis and History of "Three Voices": Notes by Joan La Barbara on her performance of Feldman's "Three Voices" as part of the Feldman retrospective at the Lincoln Center Festival, New York, August 1996', in *morton feldman Texts: An online collection* [online archive] <http://www.cnvill.net/mfilb.htm> accessed 26th June, 2016.

particularity of a live musical performance in a very specific location. The title *Cronaca del Luogo*, meaning approximately ‘the chronicle of this place’, according to Berio alludes to the particular place for which it was composed. The *Felsenreitschule* in Salzburg is unique in that the backdrop to its stage is formed of a wall of rock, into which are carved numerous small caves or ‘rooms’, overlooking the ‘piazza’ below.²⁹ For *Cronaca del Luogo*, the orchestra and chorus were situated in these caves, creating a literal wall of orchestral and vocal textures, which Berio sought to fragment and diversify as much as possible.

Perhaps it is not exact to speak about an orchestra [...] It is rather a group of 50 instrumentalists, to whom I often give a role as soloists: a sort of expanded and diversified chamber music. The same thing happens with the chorus, which is often divided into solo textures and utterances [...] The structure of the ensemble is of course particularly complex, but, at the same time, new and fascinating. This verticality generates and intensifies its own musical and acoustic qualities, helped by the use of various kinds of computer technology.³⁰

The concept of memory as something stretching back through centuries and generations, and transmitted through tangible acts of speech, song and repetition is evoked in *Cronaca del Luogo* through its libretto, based on extracts from the Hebrew bible, the canonic collection of twenty-four books recognised as central to the tradition of Rabbinic Judaism. Pecker-Berio explained the significance of the use of these texts in an introductory programmatic essay for the work’s premiere in 1999.³¹ She drew texts from the two books of Chronicles which give an account of the main events of Hebrew history, and the book of Deuteronomy, the fifth book of the *Pentateuch* or the Jewish *Torah*. In her essay, Pecker-Berio explains the importance of

²⁹ Luciano Berio, ‘Luciano Berio, Cronaca del Luogo’, in *Centro Studi Luciano Berio* [website], <http://www.lucianoberio.org/luciano-berio-cronaca-del-luogo-eng?62182044=1> accessed 14th April, 2015: ‘But there is something else behind the title. Ever since its conception, this work has been influenced by the theatre in which it will come into being: the *Felsenreitschule* in Salzburg. In this sense our work is also a ‘chronique du lieu’. The *Felsenreitschule* has always fascinated me, with its wall full of ‘rooms’ and its ‘piazza’ where the performance takes place. The wall was carved out of the rock in 1698 to enable the Salzburgers to watch equestrian events in the space below. In the Twenties the director Max Reinhardt transformed the place to accommodate theatre, and in 1948 Herbert von Karajan first used it for opera.’

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Talia Pecker-Berio, ‘Talia Pecker Berio, Cronaca del Luogo’, *Centro Studi* [website], <<http://www.lucianoberio.org/talia-pecker-berio-cronaca-del-luogo?1602857092=1>> accessed 8th August 2016.

constructing a memory of a people's laws and teachings through the innumerable concrete acts of speech and listening that have surrounded these sacred texts through Jewish history.

The notion of *Deuteronomion* (Greek for “second law” or “repeated law”), which became the name of the fifth book of the Pentateuch, is derived from the concept of *Mishneh Torah*: the exercise of repeating, explaining, expounding and memorizing the teachings of the *Torah*. It is not a coincidence that the Hebrew name of that book is *Devarim*, [...] things that happened, that are said, that are listened to and recorded. The process of memory is intimately embedded in the many concrete acts that have constituted the essence of Jewish life and tradition through time and space.³²

Pecker-Berio describes the inclusion of these scriptures in her libretto as an exploration of the liminal areas in which seemingly exclusive categories of written word, abstract logos and memory intersect with tangible spoken or sung voices, in a specific location and time.

Layers of commentary (interrogations, interpretations, cross-references, continuous actualizations) have accumulated over and around this Text of Texts, to the point that the very notion of text, of the written word (*logos*, *verbum*, the Hebrew *davar*), has turned into an audible idea, a spoken principle, a mental space within which real life pulses and evolves.³³

Cronaca del Luogo explores this physical and ‘mental space’ in which text, written word, or abstract ‘logos’ converge in a particular place and time with voice and listener to create this ‘audible idea’. By invoking the long tradition of the Jewish *Torah* through its inclusion in the libretto, *Cronaca del Luogo* draws not just on the idea of a religious text, but the fundamental human will to tell stories, make histories and accounts of their lives, and their resonances with the memories and lives of every listener. This process of identification once again demonstrates an Eco-esque ‘openness’ in the work’s construction, with its invitation to listeners to bring their own associations, memories and ideas to the listening encounter; the ‘luogo’ of the work’s title refers as much to the Jewish name for God or to the specificity of the stage location, as to the ‘mental site’ of construction of each listener’s own understanding and memory of what they hear.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

Ha-Maqom, 'the Place' or 'the Site', is one of the Hebrew ways of referring to God... But it is more than just a substitute for the Unnamable. It expands the notion of faith well beyond the borders of religion, opening it up to include the material world, the place where humans live and die, where people love and learn and work and fight for their survival. *Cronaca del Luogo* is therefore not just a chronicle of events and places from Jewish history, but rather a visitation of mental sites and situations that take shape before our eyes and in our ears, in a space which is defined by the strong and imposing presence of the wall, the memories it contains, its voices and its music.³⁴

In its framing of a people's memories, and the 'concrete acts' of repetition, speech and song in which they are formed and re-formed through time, *Cronaca del Luogo* deploys the sounding voice as a central point of intersection between these divergent modes of human experience, and through which is evoked a 'polyphony' of different voices. According to Pecker-Berio, these 'voices' emerge from the melange of fragmented texts and the associations and memories they in turn evoke in the ear and mind of the listener.

The six 'situations' that make up the dramaturgy of *Cronaca del Luogo* [...] are apparently independent of each other; yet they are connected by a textual trajectory along which a polyphony of different voices is evoked and developed. The reader of the full text of *Cronaca del Luogo* is surrounded by an echo of 'glosses' that bring those voices to the surface. They consist entirely of quotations from various sources [...] like old and new acquaintances that begged to be admitted into an ever growing net of cross-references and ramifications, as if following in the multiple paths of musical thought, which signifies only itself, while opening endless doors to further meanings.³⁵

Pecker-Berio's awareness of the 'voices' that emerge out of *Cronaca del Luogo*'s performance recalls Umberto Eco's description of the open work in their evocation of 'endless' 'further meanings' – while located in the singular point of the sounding performing voice, these multifarious 'voices' of memory and association demonstrate clearly the concept of the open voice at play. In his description of the 'open work', Eco could easily have been referring to the open voice when he wrote of 'its susceptibility to countless different interpretations which do not impinge on its unadulterable specificity', exactly in the way that Pecker-Berio describes

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid.

the ‘voices’ of *Cronaca del Luogo*, and how we can observe the voice in the related work, *Altra Voce*.³⁶

Electronics

The use of electronic technology is crucial to the dynamic, multivalent complexities of the open voice in *Altra Voce*. Berio described in the programme essay for its first performance how *Altra Voce* was generated out of material from his opera *Cronaca del Luogo*.

In one episode, namely “Il Campo” (The Field), from my *azione musicale* “Cronaca del Luogo,” there is a virtual love duet. Two voices and several instruments “fall in love” and follow one another in a constantly renewing relationship.

As we all know, in true polyphony each voice contributes to the whole yet retains its own identity, if not complete autonomy. In *Altra voce* I have liberated one voice (mezzo soprano) and one instrument (alto flute) from the whole and developed their respective autonomies and harmonic premises by, among other means, using live electronics.³⁷

The flute and the voice sketch out an exploratory interplay between them, sometimes hesitant, sometimes playful, but at all times conscious of and referential to each other. They play out a musical ‘conversation’ through repetition, questioning and variation of each other’s phrases. The application of electronics occurs in a number of ways.

Firstly, selected fragments of the performance in process are recorded, and then played back over the subsequent live musical lines, creating a multi-voiced polyphony of alto flute and voice, in a series of processes referred to as ‘real time freezes’.³⁸ Francesco Giomi and Kilian

³⁶ Umberto Eco, ‘The poetics of the open work’, in *The Open Work*, trans. Anna Cancogni (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press 1989), 23.

³⁷ Luciano Berio, ‘Programme note, Salzburger Festspiele 1999’, in *Universal Edition* [website] <<http://www.universaledition.com/Altra-voce-Luciano-Berio/composers-and-works/composer/54/work/1111>> accessed 1st June, 2015.

³⁸ Francesco Giomi, Damiano Meacci and Kilian Schwoon, ‘Live electronics in Luciano Berio’s Music’, in *Computer Music Journal*, 27/2 (2003), 34.

Schwoon, who were members of staff at *Centro Tempo Reale* and assisted Berio to develop the electronic algorithms required to realise *Altra Voce*, refer to the concept of 'heterophony', that is, a played or sung melodic line that is heard simultaneously with lines that have been derived from it.³⁹ This musical situation forms an effective polyphony in which multiple voices are drawn from a single live source, and folded back into the musical texture in a playful disruption of music's usually linear temporal direction. While these recorded fragments vary in length, and in the frequency of their repetition, each sample is recorded and replayed according to strict instructions notated in the work's electronic score, a part that is included alongside the instrumental parts and the work's full score. The duration of each recorded fragment is dictated by the variations of each live performer's interpretation of the sampled bars; thus the fixity of the score's electronics instructions is offset against the particularities of each unique live performance. Giomi and Schwoon observe that because of this indeterminacy of each player's or singer's performance and interpretation, 'the result is never 'mathematical', but reflects the vagaries and uniqueness of each separate performance.'⁴⁰

The use of electronic technologies formed part of Berio's compositional language since the earliest parts of his career, though they have always been used not as a means of novelty or the creation of a 'new' musical sounds or ideas so much as a means of extending the potential musical language of instrumental and vocal composition.⁴¹ The application of electronic technologies in Berio's work has varied and changed considerably over the years of his career, reflecting the external changes in recording technology that occurred in each decade. His earliest tape pieces such as *Ritratto di Città* in 1954, consisted of sonic collages created by cutting and splicing fragments of tape recordings made in 'live' settings, while later

³⁹ Giomi, Meacci and Schwoon, 'Live electronics in Luciano Berio's Music', 34.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 32.

⁴¹ 'If the experience of electronic music is important, as I believe it is, its importance does not reside so much in the discovery of new sounds. It lies in the possibility that these experiences will allow the composer to extend the field of sonic phenomena and to integrate them into his musical thoughts and thus to overcome the dualistic conception of musical material.' Luciano Berio, '*Thema (Omaggio a Joyce): Elaborazione Electroacustica della voce di Cathy Berberian su nastro magnetico (1958) Testo di James Joyce*', in F. Degrada, ed., *Festival Luciano Berio* (Milan: Teatro Alla Scala, 1996), 138, cit. in Andrea Cremaschi and Francesco Giomi, '"Parrrole": Berio's Words on Music Technology', in *Computer Music Journal*, 28/1 (2004), 29. 'It is incorrect to contrast new technologies with traditional vocal and instrumental techniques. From a practical point of view, there can be enormous differences, but on a conceptual level, the two are complementary as long as their evolution is always guided by musical considerations.' Luciano Berio, 'Centro Tempo Reale' in F. Degrada, ed., *Festival Luciano Berio* (Milan: Teatro Alla Scala, 1996), cit. in Cremaschi and Giomi, '"Parrrole": Berio's Words on Music Technology', 29.

electroacoustic works such as *Visage* and *Thema (Omaggio a Joyce)* relied on the expanded recording possibilities of the new Studio di Fonologia at the RAI in Milan, using its setup of nine oscillators and multitrack recording technology to explore the phonetic and expressive potential of recorded and fragmented voices in a variety of acoustic settings.⁴² Over the 1970s and 80s these technologies were overtaken by ever growing synthesizers and multitrack digital recording systems, and the development of computer software programming environments such as MAX, while their applications in an electroacoustic context was researched most notably at IRCAM in Paris.⁴³ The increasing potential for the interaction of 'live' performing voices and instruments with recordings and electronic treatment led to compositions such as *Répons* (1981) by Pierre Boulez, a piece in which he used the recently developed 4X computer system of signal processing to manipulate the live performances of six solo instruments - vibraphone, glockenspiel, harp, cimbalom, and two pianos - in real time, in dialogue with an ensemble of twenty-four instrumentalists.⁴⁴ Berio's own work *Chemins 'ex' V for Clarinet and 4C computer* (1980) was similarly based on innovations in computer technology to create a dialogue between live and electronically treated clarinet sounds. However, the technology was not sufficiently powerful to allow a flexible, reliable dialogue between live instrumental sounds and their 'real time' electronic treatment within a musical performance; *Chemins 'ex' V* was subsequently withdrawn by Berio, and *Répons* underwent several revisions by Boulez for its subsequent performances.⁴⁵ Works in the following years still depended on pre-recorded segments of instrumental or vocal sound to create an onstage interaction between live and electronic elements; Boulez's *Dialogue de l'ombre double* (1985),

⁴² For further insight into the Berio's earliest forays into electronics music, and the foundation of the Studio di Fonologia in 1955 at the Radio Audizione Italiane (RAI) in Milan, see Peter Manning, 'Milan and Elsewhere in Europe', in *Electronic and Computer Music*, 4th Edn, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013); David Osmond-Smith, 'The Tenth Oscillator: The Work of Cathy Berberian 1958-1966', *Tempo*, 58/227 (2004), 2-13; David Osmond-Smith and Ben Earle, 'Berio, Luciano', *Grove Music Online: Oxford Music Online*. [website] <<http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/02815>> accessed 2nd June, 2015.

⁴³ Peter Manning, *Electronic and Computer Music*, 4th Edn., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

⁴⁴ Miller Puckette, 'Something Digital', *Computer Music Journal*, 15/4 (1991); Alex Di Nunzio, '4X', *Musica Informatica: Computer Music Resources*, [website] <<http://www.musicainformatica.org/topics/4x.php>> Accessed 11th August 2016.

⁴⁵ Peter Manning, *Electronic and Computer Music*, 235.

for instance, creates a 'dialogue' between live and electronically treated instrumental sound by mixing the live clarinet line with pre-recorded tape segments.⁴⁶

The late 1980s and 1990s saw the development of computer aided recording, MIDI interface systems and smaller, faster technology that could cope with the demands of real-time performance situations. Following the founding in 1987 of the *Tempo Reale* foundation in Florence, Berio and his colleagues investigated the possibilities of 'real time' interaction between live musical performances, and programmed digital systems.⁴⁷ Building on the programming language MAX, developed at IRCAM in the mid-1980s, composers and engineers at the *Tempo Reale* foundation developed techniques in which 'real-time' sampling, and almost instant processing and looping of these samples became possible and practical in a recital context. These 'real time freeze' processes are, according to the developers of the digital techniques involved, 'one of the most distinctive features of [...] *Altra Voce*', as the relationship they create between live and transformed electronic sound is 'of crucial importance' in playing out the work's underlying concerns with sound, time, space and memory.⁴⁸

Secondly, the recorded fragments are subject to a progressive raising or lowering of pitch in successive repetitions, through the use of 'harmonizers', or digital processes which manipulate the intonation of the sound without distortion of its original timbral quality. Berio was keen to use these in order to avoid simple rigid repetition of phrases which he feared, according to Giomi, 'may easily become annoying' to the listener.⁴⁹ Instead, such rigid synchronicity is avoided by raising and lowering the pitch of the repeated samples, and by replaying them in sequences of irregular time intervals. The instructions for each sequence of

⁴⁶ Andrew Gerzso, 'Analyse de Dialogue de l'ombre double de Pierre Boulez', *Ressources.Ircam* [website] <http://brahms.ircam.fr/analyses/dialogue/> accessed 11th August 2016.

⁴⁷ Centro Tempo Reale, founded in 1987 in Florence, is still today a centre of composition, research and production of new techniques and methods of electroacoustic composition, and where contemporary composers create and perform new works using live and electronic musical materials. The name 'Tempo Reale' means 'real time'; the Centro Tempo Reale was founded with the specific objective of 'creating a structure in which to investigate the possibilities of real-time interaction between live performance and programmed digital systems.' The developments of these techniques at both IRCAM and Tempo Reale were instrumental in creating Max/MSP, the real time audio processing computer software that is widely used today in the creation and performance of electroacoustic music. See Giomi, Meacci and Schwoon, 'Live electronics in Luciano Berio's Music', 30; David Osmond-Smith, *Berio*, 77.

⁴⁸ Giomi, Meacci and Schwoon, 'Live electronics in Luciano Berio's Music', 34.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 32.

loops, both their pitches and durations, are given precisely in the electronics section of the work's score. Again, the indeterminacy of the performers' original live pitches gives rise to variations in the harmonics generated by the application of strict algorithms, avoiding any sense of mechanically generated tones. The result is a constantly interacting polyphonic texture built up around the sounds of the two central live performers, until these two elements, the live and the replayed sounds, are indistinguishable.

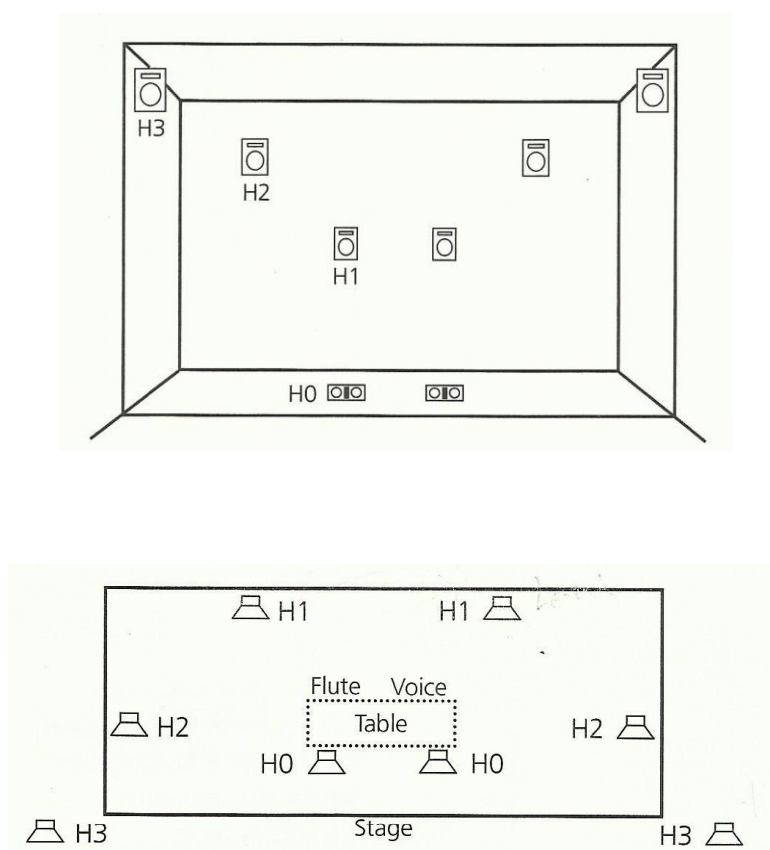
Thirdly, the recording and amplification technology, alongside the digital processes that control it, allow the replayed sounds to become mobile in the space, moving between various combinations of the eight speakers specified in the work's score. This mobility of the acoustic signals serves a number of compositional purposes, allowing variations in timbral density between different recorded samples, and also creating a moving soundscape around the listener in the auditorium. The mobility of musical sound in space was an ongoing concern for Berio throughout his compositional career, in order to explore both the timbral and sonorous possibilities of musical sounds, and also to resituate the listener in relation to the performer and the musical 'work'. He explored such concerns by both electronic and purely instrumental means, experimenting constantly with the positioning of players and singers within the auditorium, in relation to the audience. Works such as *Alleluiah II* (1956-58), *Sinfonia* (1968-69), *Coro* (1974) and *Formazioni* (1985-87) used unusual instrumental positions to draw out timbral affinities and contrasts.⁵⁰ *Sinfonia*, for example, places a third group of violins behind the orchestra, while in *Formazioni*, two harps are placed each at the furthest ends of the stage, as close as possible to the audience, creating greater differentiation between the instrumental sounds for the listener. The exchange of musical gestures and figures between these instruments creates an illusion of movement and trajectory of the musical sounds in space. In *Coro*, 40 players and 40 singers are paired up in the orchestra pit, positioning a single chorister beside an instrument of a similar register, fusing instrumental and vocal timbres, and creating a continuous 'spectrum' of musical sound from which it is difficult to distinguish individual instrumental or human voices.⁵¹

These instances of instrumental 'spatialisation' and timbral manipulation prefigure the use of electronics and amplified sounds in works such as *Ofanim* (1988-1997), *Outis* (1996), *Cronaca*

⁵⁰ Ibid., 31.

⁵¹ David Osmond-Smith, *Berio*, 80-1.

del Luogo (1999) and *Altra Voce* (1999) to move the musical sounds around in space, and create a greater diffusion of vocal and instrumental sound within the recital room or auditorium. Indeed, the speaker arrangement for *Altra Voce* is designed to translate the large-scale orchestral and choral ‘wall’ of *Cronaca del Luogo* into a chamber setting; in *Altra Voce*, this ‘wall’ becomes two diagonal lines of speakers positioned from the furthest upstage corners of the space, to converge at a point downstage centre. Their heights are varied, the highest level at the back, dropping incrementally to a low level at the central downstage position. This variation of position in three planes, the height, width and depth of the stage space, allows the replayed musical samples to be positioned precisely in space, and also to appear to move within that space, according to the programming instructions for the speakers specified in the electronic score. (Fig. 4.1)



(Fig. 4.1) Plan of speakers from stage front, and from above

The exploration of timbral affinity and fusion through the use of electronics in *Altra Voce* forms one of the key musical themes of the work. The sonorities of the alto flute and the mezzo soprano voice overlap and fuse throughout the interplay of the two live parts and their electronic repetitions, questioning their distinct sound ‘identities’ through this blurring of sonic boundaries.

The mobility of musical sounds within a performance space played an important role in Berio’s musical thought in order to disrupt and reconfigure traditional relationships between the listener and the music he came to hear. Such a concern with the role of the listener as an active collaborator in the creation of a musical experience ran through many of Berio’s works: already in *Passaggio* we have seen how the positioning of chorus members within the audience, in antagonistic opposition to the onstage vocalist, radically reworked the conventional arrangements of the recital hall, implicating and inviting the listener into the musical and thematic material of the work. Similarly, the later use of electronic amplification and speakers in *Altra Voce* serves to vary the positions of the sounds in relation to the listener, disrupting the classical music arrangement of a neatly arranged musical sound delivered to a passive, receptive audience. Instead, Berio saw such mobility of the music around the audience as a means of involving and immersing them within the musical architecture of a piece, prompting in the listener a more active mode of listening and participation, and ideally breaking down the strict divide between stage and auditorium, between creator and listener.

Listeners will less than ever before be put in the position of having to close their eyes to abandon themselves to musical dreams; they will be invited by the situation itself to consciously participate in the action. For the sense to become intelligible, they will have to follow the transformations and the unpredictable proliferation of vocal and instrumental sounds through various modes of practical expression [...] And as it energizes an ever more participating public, it will definitively purge our musical customs of any residual duality.⁵²

While such an ideal vision of musical practice may not have been entirely realised by 1999, the use of electronics in later works such as *Altra Voce* nonetheless demonstrates Berio’s

⁵² Luciano Berio, ‘Poesi e musica – un’esperienza’, in H. Poussuer, ed., *La musica elettronica*, (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1976), cit. in Cremaschi and Giomi, ‘“Parrrole”: Berio’s Words on Music Technology’, 32.

ambition to free musical performers and listeners alike from the strictures of conventional classical musical practices.

For example, there is a terrain – almost a no-man’s land – that deserves exploration: listening. We know that, concretely, a listening strategy can be an internal dimension of the musical process, in proportion to the complexity of the perceived connections the work is able to provoke. Music conceived for traditional instruments and vocal performance tends to implicate more or less standardized collective listening situations (concert hall, theatre, auditorium, etc.) The new music technologies instead do not impose an ideal listening location tied to permanent criteria of collective aggregation.⁵³

The use of electronics in both *Altra Voce* and *Cronaca del Luogo* underlines this concern to create a ‘terrain’ of listening between the vocalist and the receiver, in which the listener’s own perceptions and understandings of what she hears collaboratively create her own understandings of the voice and the work. The interaction of live sounds with electronic processes further questions the parameters of classical music’s ‘standardized collective listening situations’, in terms not just of its physical location, but at the level of some of the most fundamental parameters that traditional musical listening takes for granted, such as the linear passage of musical time and thus the temporal ‘liveness’ of the sounding voice, its ability to convey linguistic or musical sense through time, and its links with the interior ‘self’ of a person. These seemingly different modes of voice, heard in the live performance of *Altra Voce* nonetheless proceed from a single sounding voice, demonstrating clearly the multivalency and complexity, and the necessary role of the listener, that is accounted for by the theoretical model of the open voice.

How, then, can we see, or hear, the diffraction of the voice into these multiple different ‘voices’, and their simultaneous and paradoxical interactions, that *Altra Voce* demonstrates? The piece would appear to be a sparsely orchestrated miniature, its presentation reducing the recital event to its basic elements. The work’s score calls for a staging that presents simply an instrumentalist, a vocalist, and their scores, facing an audience of listeners in the conventional

⁵³ Luciano Berio, ‘Centro Tempo Reale’ in F. Degrada, ed., *Festival Luciano Berio* (Milan: Teatro Alla Scala, 1996) cit. in Cremaschi and Giomi, ‘Parrrole’: Berio’s Words on Music Technology’, 34.

arrangement. The electronics are operated using an offstage computer, and the speakers are arranged in such a way as to frame, but not interfere with the central tableau of onstage voice and flute. In the opening bars of the work we hear the voice in as stripped down a form as possible, sounding on a single tone, on a closed 'n' sound with no open vowel sound to characterise it. It is heard without any linguistic shape or meaning. It is presented simply as sound. Compared with the theatrics and elaborate orchestration of its operatic counterpart, the sense of quiet 'interiority' of the whole piece is perhaps one of its most striking aspects. *Altra Voce* presents the singing voice and the flute at their most exposed, paring down not just the recital event, but the voice and the vocal sound, to their basic constituent elements. From that point, the piece uses the electronics and speakers to explore the parameters of the singing, performing voice that usually remain unremarked upon in musical listening. *Altra Voce* asks how we can experience the voice as 'live' in a moment, and yet hear it through time? How can the voice communicate abstract semantic and musical sense, and yet retain its physical, punctual 'presence'? And how can the voice, experienced as 'interior' by the singer, be heard simultaneously by the listener as a separate, sonic object?

In order to articulate the complexities of these different aspects of the voice in music and to begin to answer these questions, it is useful to look beyond musicology to wider critical theory; a consideration of the relation of vocality to text, time and performance leads inexorably to the ideas of literary theorist and philosopher Jacques Derrida, whose seminal work on deconstructing the mechanisms of language, signification, communication and the relationship of the subject to the outside world and to the separate 'other' has resonated through the humanities, literary theory and critical discourse since the 1960s. Nevertheless, relatively little attention has been given to the usefulness of his theoretical framework in the context of vocal performance. The concerns of works such as *Speech and Phenomena* (1967) and *Of Grammatology* (1967) on the sounding voice reflect those in *Cronaca del Luogo* and *Altra Voce*: while Derrida focussed on the relationships between the voice and literary text, the communication of written words and linguistic sense, here those concerns can be seen played out in the fragmented historical libretto, the musical text, and their iteration in vocal performance.

In performing *Altra Voce* myself, I had the opportunity to explore first-hand a number of the complex phenomenological positions that the sounding voice occupies in the mode of musical

performance; the dialectics of the voice and its communicative functions through time, and the seeming paradoxical duality of interiority and the external sounding voice, are themes that are explored and articulated in Derrida's philosophical works. Drawing on his theoretical perspectives on the intersections of writing, speech and communication, and mapping them onto my own experience of performing *Altra Voce* as the singer of the ensemble, the following discussion addresses each of these questions in turn, considering the voice in *Altra Voce* in terms of 1) its punctual 'liveness', 2) its capacity to convey linguistic and musical sense through time, and 3) the relation of interior voice to external 'voice-object.'

1) Voice's 'liveness'

The subject of voice's 'live' presence in musical performance, and its seemingly unruly resistance to the imposition of abstract texts and composer intentions, has proved a source of fascination and commentary to generations of critics, both within the musicological fold and beyond; the apparent paradox of this position has been translated by some as the thrilling encounter with the 'uncanny' that gives live vocal music its unique and unmistakeable excitement. Carolyn Abbate suggests there is a futility to any discursive attempts to account for this aspect of live performance, when she comments that,

There is something about the objective mode that seems to protest too much, bypassing the uncanny qualities that are always waiting nearby in trying to domesticate what remains nonetheless wild.⁵⁴

Steven Connor similarly, in his discussion of the sounding voice in Berio's *Sequenza III*, observes that the piece's power lies in this dialectical tension between textual imposition and the live voice's resistance to a score and text that would see it fragmented and silenced, writing

⁵⁴ Carolyn Abbate, 'Music—Drastic or Gnostic?', *Critical Inquiry*, 30/3 (2004), 508.

that 'the piece depends upon the fact that the voice insists on its wild, unruly singularity, even and especially in the condition of its disintegration.'⁵⁵

Each of these perspectives reflects an ingrained cultural and critical view of the voice that sees it in terms of an antagonistic, irreconcilable binary, between its 'unruly' momentary physical presence, and the abstract text, whether musical or linguistic, that it bears. Each of these two modes of voice would seem to be exclusive of the other, of an entirely different order of being, one physical, punctual and tangible, while the other is abstract, ephemeral, metaphysical. *Altra Voce*, however, questions the seemingly absolute division of these categories, and the assumptions around the sounding voice on which it is based. Rather than presenting the voice in the guise of *either* irreducible physical presence *or* the bearer of metaphysical 'meaning', the work enacts the simultaneity and dialectic interaction between these conceptual positions.

To identify and observe these multiple dialectical positions presented in Berio's *Altra Voce*, the work of Derrida offers a useful theoretical framework whereby these different 'voices', and their interactions with text, interiority and subjectivity, can be articulated. Derrida emerged from a generation contemporaneous with the Italian *neoavanguardia*, and with Berio's earlier compositional works, who like their avant-garde Italian counterparts sought to question radically the foundational precepts of western cultural thought and practice. In France, Derrida's critique of established western philosophical principles led him to question the relationship of the self with the world through language, meaning, communication, and the voice. His work has parallels with much of the Italian neo-avant garde's concern with the role of the receiver of any artwork, whether reader, listener or observer, in the creation of the artistic event. As Derrida scholar and semiotician Dario Compagno writes in his discussion of different theories of authorship in 20th century European thought, Derrida's approach, neglects any stable core of meaning [...] and puts on the same level of relevance what the author *did* want to write and what the reader adds by him- or herself.⁵⁶ As such, the perception of the sounding voice is central to Derrida's thesis into the relationships between text,

⁵⁵ Steven Connor, 'The Decomposing Voice of Postmodern Music', *New Literary History*, 32/3 (2001), 478.

⁵⁶ Dario Compagno, 'Theories of Authorship and Intention in the Twentieth Century. An Overview', *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, 1/1 (2012), 44.

communication and an experience of self, discussed in his most famous works, *Speech and Phenomena*, *On Grammatology* and *Writing and Difference*, all published in 1967.

These three works form the central pillars of Derrida's lifelong project of inquiry into and interrogation of the very bases of the Western philosophical tradition. Derrida questions the logical precepts of this tradition, derived from classical Aristotelean logic, which presuppose an essential reality governed by certain fixed laws. These laws assume certain fundamental qualities of this 'essential' reality, namely, that it is 'simple', that is, free of any inherent contradiction, and it is 'present to itself', that is, free of any mediation, and conscious of itself without any gap between the reality and its consciousness. Such logic gave rise to a system of binary concepts, such as physical and metaphysical, ideal and real, interior and exterior for example, in which each element is governed by these 'essential' laws, and in which each opposes and excludes the other. In such 'essential' logic, each element is either one thing or the other, it can only be or not be, and it can never inhabit any point in between these absolutes. This logic, then, does not allow for conceptualising elements in terms of mediation, difference, paradox or complexity.⁵⁷ Derrida's three seminal 1967 works saw the instigation of the lifelong project he called 'deconstruction', in which he questioned fundamentally the assumptions of Western metaphysical thought based on these 'essential' laws. In 'deconstructing' many of the logical precepts around speech, language and writing, Derrida opened up fundamental questions on the nature of the voice, and its seemingly irreducible, yet complex and paradoxical nature.

In taking Derrida's work as a framework in which to approach the complexities of the sounding, performative voice that Berio presents in *Altra Voce*, we can observe the voice as a site of paradoxes, of binaries that cannot be easily reduced to a hierarchical order, but rather seem stubbornly to persist in a series of irreducible dynamic relationships. Thus categories such as physical and metaphysical, physical voice and semantic meaning, or 'live' bodily presence and conceptual absence are presented and explored in simultaneous tension, suggesting the voice not as a site of 'pure' or 'simple' oppositions, but of a dynamic, complex and multivalent interaction of a number of different aspects. Derrida's work offers a prism through which to view the voice that is presented in *Altra Voce*, diffracted into these

⁵⁷ See Zeynep Direk and Leonard Lawlor, 'Introduction', in eds. Zeynep Direk and Leonard Lawlor, *A companion to Derrida* (Wiley/Blackwell, 2014), 1-20; Nicholas Royle, *Jacque Derrida* (Routledge: 2003).

numerous multiple forms; as such it shows us the open voice in its multifaceted unity, indivisible but 'open' to the endless possible understandings and constructions of it in the listening encounter.

In his preface to the 1973 translation of Derrida's *Speech and Phenomena*, the American philosopher David B Allison discusses the importance of Derrida's considerations of time in the process of speech and communication, and its role in critiquing fundamental philosophical principles such as one's concept of self, and one's presence in the world. The basis of Derrida's project, he explains, is his highlighting of a logical fallacy, that is, of the concept of a punctual, temporally isolated 'moment' as the primordial source of a human consciousness of 'being' or presence. Rather, the experience of time as a 'phasing' of what Allison terms 'retentional and protentional traces' precludes the possibility of a temporally isolated 'moment', each moment in effect being defined by what is gone, or yet to come.⁵⁸ Paradoxically, one's experience of one's self in the present moment is therefore defined by the movement of that experience through time. Allison summarises Derrida's position when he writes

if the present 'now' were conceived as a punctual instant, there could be no coherent account of experience as such; one would paradoxically end in denying the identity of one's own experience, one's own self [...] There could be no self-relation in such a case; in short, there could *be* no life, understood as absolute subjectivity.⁵⁹

While Derrida's project focussed specifically on the role of the voice in speech, and its relationship with written text, the paradox that he articulates - between the seemingly punctual moment of 'live' presence and the unfolding of perception and meaning through time - emerges time and again as fundamental to the experience of performed vocal music, and one that forms a central preoccupation of Berio and Pecker-Berio's opera and chamber work. Abbate and Connor's comments on the voice's 'unruly' resistance to the apparent impositions of abstract systems of meaning via the score or libretto encapsulate this cultural

⁵⁸ David B Allison, 'Translator's Introduction', in *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. David Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), xxxi-xlii.

⁵⁹ Allison, 'Translator's Introduction', xxxvii.

and critical assumption, while *Altra Voce* offers a musical framework that both highlights and interrogates this position.

The perception of voice's physical 'liveness' in musical performance contains in it the assumption of its physical presence manifest in each moment, and as such, that this momentary 'uniqueness' contains nothing of the moments that have gone before, or of what is yet to come. The unfolding of the 'unruly' voice then, as it is heard in live performance, is made up of a series of discrete, singular moments, each one following the last, but not yet at the next, resistant to the abstract, temporal constructs of language, text or meaning. In *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida articulates the problem with this system of logic that makes opposing absolutes of the concepts of 'presence' and time.

In all these directions, the presence of the present is thought of as arising from the bending-back of the return, from the moment of repetition, and not the reverse [...] Is not the concept [...] undermined by the very condition of its self-presence, that is, by 'time'?⁶⁰

Altra Voce frames this question explicitly in its own 'bending back of the return', by disrupting the conventional forward direction of musical time through electronic sampling and replayed loops, and asking what effect this has on the perception of the voice and its 'live' presence. In the opening bars of the piece, the voice is heard sounding in the recital room, without text or even vowels, sounding a unison *f* with the alto flute. The first segment to be recorded is these opening bars, indicated at RS₁ (Recorded Sample 1), which are then looped, at pitch, throughout the rest of the piece, creating a bedrock of this single sounding tone on which the musical architecture is then built. (Fig. 4.2)

⁶⁰ Jacques Derrida, 'Signs and the Blink of an Eye', in *Speech and Phenomena*, trans. David Allison (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 68.

Starts 00.04 on *Altra Voce* recording⁶¹

Fig. 4.2

This *f* serves as a tonal and harmonic reference point throughout the piece, from which the musical material diverges and returns to constantly. The voice in the early bars gradually unfolds a simple melody, marking its progression through time by its variance from and return to the original, constantly sounding *f*. As such, it reflects the linear temporal unfolding of a vocal line in a conventional musical piece, each moment understood to follow the last and precede the next. However, with the introduction of the ‘real time freeze’ processes, a fragment of melody is recorded at bar 6 and begins to be replayed at bar 8, while two further segments are recorded at bar 12 and bar 13, and both replayed while subjected to a progressive raising and lowering of their pitch with each reiteration. (Fig 4.3)

Starts 00.41 on *Altra Voce* recording

Fig. 4.3

⁶¹ See Appendix 1 – CD/Recording of *Altra Voce*, performed September 2nd 2015; also available at <https://soundcloud.com/user-381834598/altra-voce-1999-luciano-berio>

As the live flute and voice lines progress, they are joined by the recorded segments, and the raised and lowered fragments of voice and flute loops; this process gradually creates a polyphony of voices, or rather, the ‘heterophony’ referred to by the work’s creators, the multi-voiced musical texture formed from one solitary voice and one flute.⁶² By bar 16, there is a polyphony constructed of ten separate lines, made up of the live flute and mezzo soprano lines, and the recorded, looped and variously ‘harmonized’ segments from the preceding bars. (Fig. 4.4)

Bar 16 ‘Heterophony’ of ten lines

Live Flute
Cue 4 – lowered vocal line

Live Voice
Cue 3 – raised flute line

Cue 1 - PS 1 Flute and Voice
Cue 2 - PS2 Flute and Voice

Cue 5 - PS3 Flute and Voice

Starts 01.37 on Altra Voce recording

Fig. 4.4

In the course of performing this unfolding ‘heterophony’, I lent my live voice to the growing musical texture. As such, I sang the scored vocal line while hearing and orienting myself musically by the sound of the other ‘voices’, that is, my own recorded voice, captured and replayed around the recital space. As a musician, I listened and responded to these ‘other’ voices in order to produce a line that ‘fit’ harmonically, timbrally and temporally with the

⁶² Giomi, Meacci and Schwoon, ‘Live electronics in Luciano Berio’s Music’, 34.

surrounding ‘polyphonic’ texture. As the piece progressed, it was my experience that my live sung line was shaped by the sound of my own voice that had gone before, folding the past utterance into the ‘present’ moment of my live song. This exposure of the traces of the ‘past’ voice that inhere in each ‘present’ utterance can be found throughout *Altra Voce*, for example at the point of PS4 (Played Sample 4), at bar 62 in the score. (Fig. 4.5)

The image displays a musical score for a piece titled 'Altra Voce'. It consists of three systems of music, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The first system starts at bar 61 and ends at bar 64. The second system starts at bar 65 and ends at bar 68. The third system starts at bar 69 and ends at bar 74. A specific section labeled 'PS 4' (Played Sample 4) is highlighted in the second system, between bars 62 and 64. This section shows a recorded sample of a voice singing an 'eh' tone ending on a percussive aspirate gesture, which is then replayed. The lyrics 'di ven - to vie - ni vie - ni a - pri gli oc - chi a - pri gli oc - chi a -' are visible under the vocal lines. The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings like 'f' (forte) and 'pp' (pianissimo).

Starts 05.10 *Altra Voce* recording

Fig. 4.5

The recorded sample (RS4), recorded at bars 41-42, contains the sound of the voice singing an 'eh' tone ending on a percussive aspirate gesture. This fragment is then replayed later at PS4 (Played Sample 4) between bars 62 to 74, sounding out distinctively, the repeated aspirate punctuating the otherwise continuous sung tone. The live vocal line playfully approaches and

retreats from this sustained note for its duration, sometimes singing a dissonant $e\flat'$ alongside it (bars 69-70), and at times dropping away as far as the $c\sharp'$ below (Bar 71). The final bar of PS₄, at Bar 74, hears the live voice dropping and climbing in a sequence of triplet figures, approaching and finally rising above the recorded voice with a final aspirate $f\sharp'$, almost coinciding with the recorded voice's last aspirate $e\flat'$ ". (Fig 4.6)

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is a vocal line, starting at bar 74, with a circled '8' above it. The bottom staff is a piano accompaniment, starting at bar 41, with a circled '9' above it. The piano part includes a section labeled 'RS 4' and a 3/4 time signature. The lyrics 'pri gli oc - chi [i]' are written below the piano staff, and 'te [e]' is written below the vocal staff.

 Starts 06.17 on *Altra Voce* recording

Fig 4.6 Bar 74 playing simultaneously with RS₄

This duet between the recorded voice and my 'live' voice shows the influence of the 'past' voice on the present, as my live voice inevitably responded to its own recording. It creates a 'bending back' of musical time, highlighting the traces and influences of previous moments that inevitably inhere in each experience of a musical 'present'. As such, it critiques a logic that would propose each moment of vocal 'presence' as a series of discrete, punctual instants, showing instead the traces of the past and future that paradoxically inhere in any experience of the 'present' moment. This 'bending back' can be heard too in the way that the piece

positions the recorded vocal samples in relation to the live voice, referring not just to past vocalisations but anticipating the vocal sound yet to come, combining them with a voice that was yet to exist at the moment of *their* inception. The simultaneity of these past fragments with the singer's live utterance points to the relationship of the 'present' voice with the future, and its inherent anticipation of the voice that is always yet to come. RS7 at bar 98 for example, takes a 'snapshot' of a rapid musical gesture, that is then repeated and varied in a number of ways in the live lines of the flute and the voice between bars 99 and 109. (Fig. 4.7)

The image shows a musical score for two staves. The top staff is a flute line, and the bottom staff is a vocal line. The flute staff contains complex chromatic clusters. The vocal staff has lyrics: '[e] vie - ni [e] [i] vie - ni [e] [e]'. A dashed box labeled 'RS 7' highlights a specific musical gesture in the flute staff, which is then repeated and varied in the vocal line. The time signature is 3/4.

🔊 Starts 08.35 on *Altra Voce* recording

Fig 4.7

The chromatic clusters of $f\sharp$, $f\sharp$, $g\sharp$, and $c\sharp$, $d\sharp$ appear in truncated, elongated and fragmentary forms in the following ten bars, in the 'live' flute and voice parts. The original gesture is replayed between bars 101 and 109, (PS7) as a constant reminder of the genesis of the musical and vocal material being sung, its sounding out creating a polyphonic synthesis of past, 'present' and future voices in a musical whole (Fig. 4.8). In this way, Berio's musical work presents the dialectic between vocal 'presence' as it is found in 'live' recital performance, and its unfolding existence in time, a paradox that is reflected in Derrida's thesis on the sounding voice, and its relationship with time and meaning in speech.

The musical score consists of three systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment line. The first system (measures 100-104) features a vocal line with lyrics "vie/ vie - - - ni a - - pri a -" and a piano accompaniment with a 4/4 time signature and a *pp* dynamic. The second system (measures 105-119) includes a vocal line with lyrics "pri [i] a - pri gli oc - chi [i] a - scol - - - ta [a] a - scol/ a - -" and a piano accompaniment with a 3/4 time signature and a *poco accel.* instruction. The third system (measures 120-122) shows a vocal line with lyrics "scol - ta [a] un" and a piano accompaniment with a 3/4 time signature and a *poco accel.* instruction. The score includes various musical notations such as triplets, slurs, and dynamic markings. A section labeled "PS 7" is indicated in the first system, and a section labeled "G" is indicated in the second system. The score also includes a section labeled "H 2-1, 0, 2+1" in the first system and "H 2-1, 0, 2-1, 2+1" in the second system.

Starts 08.40 on *Altra Voce* recording

Fig. 4.8

In pinpointing the 'problem' of time to the logic of live vocal 'presence', Derrida articulated in *Speech and Phenomena* what *Altra Voce* presents in a performative forum, that is, the impossibility of cleanly separating such apparently distinct elements of the voice as 'liveness' and physical presence from the abstractions of meaning or signification. Rather, he suggests

these elements are related in a dialectic and inseparable relationship, what he terms an 'irreducible synthesis'.

At this point, however, we cannot avoid noting that a certain concept of the 'now', of the present as punctuality of the instant, discretely but decisively sanctions the whole system of 'essential distinctions'. If the punctuality of the instant is a myth, a spatial and mechanical metaphor, an inherited metaphysical concept, or all that at once, and if the presence of self-presence is not *simple*, if it is constituted in a primordial and irreducible synthesis, then the whole of Husserl's argumentation is threatened in its very principle.⁶³

In *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida critiques the phenomenological project of his predecessor Edmund Husserl in articulating the precise relationship between meaning expressed in speech, and the ephemeral physical 'presence' of the speaking voice. Husserl's position is based on the classical logic of opposing irreducible absolutes, for example, between the 'absence' of abstract linguistic meaning, and the 'presence' of the physical sounding voice. Based on his reading of Husserl, Derrida suggested that the experience of a temporally isolated instant is impossible, as time is instead experienced as a continual enfolding of past and future moments into the present.⁶⁴ Each moment of 'live' vociferation contains within it the effects and anticipation of what has preceded it and what is to come, exactly as *Altra Voce* shows. Berio's lifelong questions around the voice as musical and compositional material are here succinctly framed in each new performance of his composition. The voice we utter and hear, so apparently indicative of irreducible live presence in the moment of utterance, in fact can be understood as such only as it exists in time. It is through the repetition and comparison of one moment with the next that we can comprehend the nature of our experience, in this case,

⁶³Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, 61.

⁶⁴ Edmund Husserl's two-volume work *Logische Untersuchungen* (Logical Investigations) (1901) was hugely influential on the subsequent development of phenomenological theories in continental philosophy and critical theory. According to Husserl scholar Donn Welton, Husserl's achievement lay in the articulation of new relationships between language and experience, and between subject and object; in *Logical Investigations*, he attempted to integrate theories of 'truth' with theories of meaning and representation, to present a coherent account of the subject's relationship with the world and perceived 'reality'. Donn Welton, *The Essential Husserl* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1999).

the sound of a human voice, resonating in song, forming meaningful words, or musical tones. What resonates through Derrida's argumentation, and what Berio's *Altra Voce* demonstrates, is a paradoxical relationship between the seemingly fixed moment of 'live' vociferation, and the passage of time. *Altra Voce* presents a dialectical co-existence of these seemingly irreconcilable aspects of voice, demonstrating the open voice in its inherent and paradoxical multivalency.

2) Presence and Sense

This presentation of the voice as formed of a dialectic and indivisible relationship between instantaneous 'presence', and its movement through time, leads to a consideration of the relationship between the tangible voice, and the meanings and sense it embodies, in utterance, speech and song.

Linguistic meaning in speech is conveyed through signifiers, formed by physical sonic shapes, phonemes, consonants and vowels that coalesce into recognisable words. Even prior to the formation of words, vocal utterance and gesture can convey meaning to the listener through timbre, duration or pitch, in the form of a sigh, a sob, or a peal of laughter. The very quality of the vocal sound can transmit information, such as the age, gender or health of the vocalist. Musical sense is generated through the interactions of the varied pitches, dynamics and durations of the vocalisations, that are heard and understood by the listener as musical tones and phrases. While Derrida focussed on linguistic sense in speech and text when considering vocal utterance, *Altra Voce* stages the vocal transmission of sense on a number of levels, both linguistic and musical. The linguistic level is formed of the words and phonemes uttered by the singer, at times fragmented and elongated into single vowel sounds, while at others the text is clearly comprehensible. From bars 15 to 21 for example, we can hear clearly the phrase 'un suono di tromba, quasi, quasi, quasi un suono di flauto' (the sound of a trumpet, almost, almost, this is the sound of a flute) set clearly in the vocal line (Fig. 4.9).

① suo - no di trom - ba qua - - si qua - si qua - si un suo - no di flau - -

Starts 01.37 on *Altra Voce* recording

Fig. 4.9

In contrast, bars 95 – 100 hear just one complete word ‘vieni’ (come), while most of the vocal line is set to the [e] and [i] vowel sounds derived from this word (Fig. 4.10)

① [i] [e] [i] [e] vie - ni [e] [i] vie - ni [e]

Starts 08.26 on *Altra Voce* recording

Fig. 4.10

Musical sense is generated through the interaction of recognisable musical tones, which combine to form musical phrases and gestures. In the opening bars of *Altra Voce*, we hear first the flute and then the voice sound a simple, sustained f , without any words or even, at first, any vowel sounds (Fig. 4.11).

Flauto contralto* [n] [o] non [e]

Mezzosoprano [n] [o] non [e]

Starts 00.04 on *Altra Voce* recording

Fig 4.11

To hear, and recognise a voice as singing an intended musical *f* requires this comprehension to occur in time. The tiny acoustic ‘differences’ in the sound, that make up the timbres and aural qualities of a specific tone, are compared between one moment and the next, to recognise and establish the sound as a sung *f*. As the voice rises by a semitone, before reverting back to the original *f*, we hear a comparison through time of each note with the other, defining each through its difference from the other. The sounds thus begin to form musical sense in their sounding of specific, recognisable tones, unfolding a constant comparison of their ‘present’ state to that which has gone before, the ‘trace’ of the previous moments, and what is yet to come. This temporality is referred to by Derrida as fundamental to the formation of sense in speech and vociferation.

Sense, being temporal in nature [...] is never simply present; it is always already engaged in the ‘movement’ of the trace, that is, in the order of ‘signification’. It has always already issued forth from itself.⁶⁵

Again, he articulates the intersection of seemingly irreducible vocal presence with text and abstract sense that is heard in *Altra Voce*. Both Derrida’s theory, and the musical work suggest a co-presence of these apparently opposing elements, the abstract sense and the ‘simple’ presence inextricably united, each defined by the other. In folding back the recording of the previously sung tones, a series of dyads and chords are generated with the live vocal line (Fig. 4.12). As such, the piece playfully exposes the ‘traces’ of past and future vociferation in the construction and perception of musical meaning, undermining the assumption of ‘simple’ momentary vocal presence.

⁶⁵ Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, 85-6.

The image shows a musical score for a vocal piece. It consists of a conventional score for the singer and a recorded sample (PS 3) below it. The conventional score is for a vocal line, with notes and lyrics 'suo - no - di - trom - ba'. The recorded sample (PS 3) is marked with (F1) and (MS) and shows a different pitch and timbre than the live sung notes. The score is for a vocal line, with notes and lyrics 'suo - no - di - trom - ba'. The recorded sample (PS 3) is marked with (F1) and (MS) and shows a different pitch and timbre than the live sung notes.

Starts 01.37 on *Altra Voce* recording

Fig. 4.12

Here we see the notes as notated in the conventional score for the singer to sing, placed alongside the replayed recorded samples, notated 'as heard'. The combination of tones between the two replayed samples (PS₁ and PS₂) and the live sung notes create in this small fragment a chord of a, an f' and a g^b, at Bar 16. The musical sense of this brief sounding triad is informed by the chords that precede and follow it, as both the live voice and its recorded fragments continue to sound. The continued replaying of these past and future vocal 'traces' alongside the live 'present' voice creates a sequence of unfolding harmonies and lines, effectively an unfolding of musical 'sense' through time. The reference of recorded samples to the 'outside' of the present moment, that is, its remembered past and anticipated future, in a harmonic whole foregrounds the inextricable relations between what is 'inside' an instantaneous 'present' moment, and its 'outside'. Derrida articulated this complex relationship in his essay 'Meaning and Representation', writing that

Since the trace is the intimate relation of the living present with its outside [...] the temporalisation of sense is, from the outset, a 'spacing'. As soon as we admit spacing as both 'interval' or difference and as openness upon the outside, there can no longer be any absolute inside.⁶⁶

⁶⁶ Ibid., 86.

This 'spacing' is demonstrated, amplified, and pulled apart by the electronic recordings and replays in *Altra Voce*. The 'interval', or difference from one sounding moment to the next is magnified and played upon by replaying the recorded voice as the live voice continues singing. When performing *Altra Voce*, I quite literally heard my voice that had gone before, the 'trace' or memory that was contained in my 'present' voice, of its own past and future moments. The spacing become evident too between my own 'interior' voice, the tone I heard within my own body as I sang, and my voice in the 'exterior' world, in which I heard and combined my sung tone with other external sounds to create musical sense. Thus, not only did *Altra Voce* stage the dialectic relationship between physical vocal 'presence' and abstract 'meaning' in time, it also demonstrated the intractable relationship between one's 'interiority' and the external world, in which one's voice seems to exist simultaneously. In other words, there is an irreducible symbiosis between the instant of live vocal 'presence', and the movement through time that constitutes recognition and meaning. Rather than being able to separate these aspects cleanly into such categories as 'abstract meaning' and 'physical presence', or 'inner self' and 'outside world', *Altra Voce* demonstrates that these aspects of the voice are symbiotically related, each defined by its relation with the other. In his discussion of the voice in speech, Derrida similarly observes that

the inside of expression does not accidentally happen to be affected by the outside of indication. Their intertwining is primordial; it is not a contingent association that could be undone by methodic attention and patient reduction.⁶⁷

In this way the performance of *Altra Voce* clearly demonstrated the open voice, in its dynamic and multivalent potential. Even while I heard 'my' own interior voice as I sang, listeners heard in the same voice an external resonating sound in the performance room; both seemingly different 'voices' depending on the position and perspective of the 'receiver', yet ultimately the same voice, open to the unique hearings and understanding of each separate listener. It enacts the libretto's exhortations to 'come', 'listen', and adopt, in the Regista's words 'the desire to hear', opening one's ears to the voice in all of its resonating potential, here in the performance of *Altra Voce*, and in all sung performances, in all instances of the live, intersubjective vocal encounter.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 87.

3) Interior Voice and 'voice-object'

Thus *Altra Voce*, in its construction, self-consciously presents this 'primordial' association between the interior voice, and its sounding form in the outside world. The seeming contradiction between the interior voice as it is linked to the experience of our inner consciousness and will, and the externally resonating vocal 'object' is presented as an enigma by Mladen Dolar in his summary of the voice from philosophical, psychodynamic and theoretical perspectives through history in which he positions the voice ultimately as a sonic object, separate from the body or the self, defined by the gap between its sounding form, and the body that produces it.⁶⁸ Through a rigorous reading of Lacan and Derrida, Dolar concludes that the attempt to contemplate the voice separately from its linguistic and communicative functions, to try to approach or conceptualise the voice, discursively, intellectually, or even through its engagement with music, is to be

faced with an unbridgeable gap, since the trouble is that the object never fits the body. And further, it cannot be tackled by introducing the singing voice, the music, as the proper dimension of voice, one that would transcend the narrow framework of speech and would retain the ineffable realm of expression beyond signification. For music, with all its seductive force and irresistible appeal is rather an attempt to domesticate the object, to turn it into an object of aesthetic pleasure, to put up a screen against what is unbearable in it.⁶⁹

But while Dolar generalises 'music' as an irresistible aesthetic distraction, a 'screen', performing *Altra Voce* in fact focusses on and magnifies this gap. Here, rather than try to 'domesticate' the vocal object by musical means, the work draws on music's ability to loosen the automatic associations between voice and its signifying functions, to present the voice as 'pared down' and exposed as possible, devoid at the outset of any language or melodic form.

⁶⁸ Mladen Dolar, 'The Object Voice,' in Renata Salecl and Slavoj Žižek, eds., *Gaze and Voice as Love Objects* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1996), 7-31.

⁶⁹ Dolar, 'The Object Voice', 10.

From this starting point, the work allows us to contemplate the voice's links with one's interior experience and will, while presenting it simultaneously as a resonating sonic 'object', severed from its bodily source through the use of recorded samples and spatialized speakers. Through its musical construction the piece is able to present these different 'voices' in a coherent simultaneity, much like a Mozartian sextet where a babel of different conversations becomes a series of musical lines, woven into a musical architecture in which all can be heard. *Altra Voce's* 'heterophonic' musical texture allows us to hear a number of seemingly contradictory 'voices' simultaneously, framing the inherent multiplicity of the open voice, and inviting the listener to choose a voice to follow through the piece, or to experience the enjoyment of this dynamic plurality.

Altra Voce here presents two seemingly exclusive aspects of the human voice; the interior voice of one's 'self', and the external 'voice-object'. It frames the voice as linked with one's subjective interiority, and thus the associations with the 'self' on which classical musical culture relies for much of its aesthetic and 'expressive' power. At the same time, *Altra Voce* also foregrounds the phenomenon of the externally sounding vocal 'object', dissociated from the body and the self of the singer. In presenting both of these aspects of the voice, the work exposes and foregrounds not a problematic binary construction of the voice, but rather, the inextricable co-presence, and as Derrida termed it, the 'irreducible synthesis' of both, at the same time as they form a seemingly irreducible gap, in the site of the sounding singing voice.⁷⁰

Thus, *Altra Voce* highlights the voice's habitual cultural position - played out in classical music and musicological discourse - as being inexorably linked and somehow revealing the profound interior world of a subject; while also playing with and undermining this assumed link. On the one hand then, *Altra Voce*, in its guise of a musical piece firmly embedded within the cultural practices of Western classical music, presents the singer and her voice in a conventional way; positioned on a stage, with her score, facing an attentive group of listeners. At the outset of the piece, her voice is linked in the minds and ears of the listeners with her body, through the visual and aural association of her mouth with the vocal sound that is heard in the room; her physical gestures 'match' the voice, her body swaying or moving slightly, synchronous with the sung lines that are produced. The vocal sound is linked with its

⁷⁰ Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, 61.

resonating bodily source, and as such, is associated in the minds of the audience with the interiority of the vocalist, with her interior consciousness and will.

This supposed link between the sounding voice and the ‘interiority’ of a subject underpins much of the dramatic and musical practice embedded in musical and operatic culture; the performance of a song, lied, chanson or operatic aria contains the implication of this link between a character’s inner experience and the singer’s vocal expression of it. While the vocalist is recognised as being separate from the character they sing, nevertheless the singer’s ability to ‘express’ the emotion and inner self of a character rests on an assumption of the links between the voice and human interiority, beyond simply the words or linguistic signification it conveys. A theorist contemporaneous with Derrida, Walter Ong, reflected on this unique capacity of the voice over other modes of communication or expression in his researches into the relationship between text and orality, when he wrote that,

The principal one of these other characteristics is the unique relationship of sound to interiority when sound is compared to the rest of the senses. This relationship is important because of the interiority of human consciousness and of human communication itself.⁷¹

Ong’s psychodynamic account of the voice positions it as primarily linked with the interior ‘self’ of the vocalist, with the ‘exterior’ sounding voice as a ‘residue’ or remainder to the process of self-constitution and communication; in both Derrida’s considerations and in the performance of *Altra Voce*, however, we find in the voice the complex interaction of these two elements, rather than the hierarchical assertion of one over the other.

In performing *Altra Voce*, I was able to observe clearly at the outset of the piece how a conventional live vocal performance frames and reinforces my own associations between ‘my’ voice and my interior will, in both my own awareness, and in the awareness of the listeners as they watch and listen to the performance.

⁷¹ Walter Ong, *Orality and Literacy 3rd Edn.* (Oxford and New York: Routledge, 2012), 70.

Flauto contralto*)

Mezzosoprano

pp mp pp

pp mp pp

RS 1

7'' ca.

[66]

PS 1

RS 2

gior [o] no non è gior

Starts 00.04 on *Altra Voce* recording

Fig. 4.13

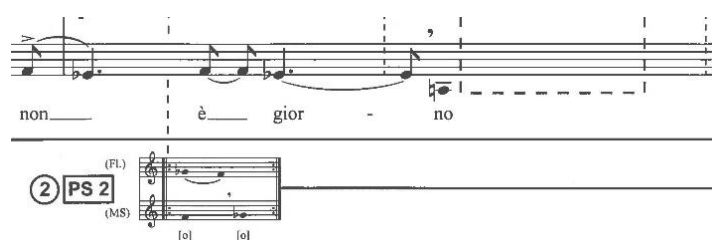
Here in the opening bars, the flute opened on a pianissimo *f*, and my voice followed. As the singer, I saw the written note on the page, translated it into a sounding *f* in my 'inner voice', and then sounded out the note externally. At bar 3, I could hear the effect of the initial variance from the *f*, as my voice rose a semitone at the instigation of my own 'inner' conscious will (Fig. 4.13). Hearing my 'inner voice' singing these notes reinforced my sensation of self-awareness, that is, the experience of my self as a discrete consciousness separate from the surrounding 'outside' world. *Altra Voce* demonstrates musically what Derrida articulates in his meditation on voice and speech:

It is implied in the very structure of speech that the speaker hears himself: both that he perceives the sensible form of the phonemes and that he understands his own expressive intention.⁷²

Just as speech is formed of words and phonemes conveyed in vocal sound, so does the sung *f* form a musical signifier within a wider context of musical phrases and statements, their sound reinforcing my own sense of 'my' voice acting on my expressive will.

⁷² Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, 78.

However, on the other hand, *Altra Voce* also shows, simultaneously, the voice as an external vocal ‘object’, separate in time and space from the body and will of the singer; as such, it prises apart and magnifies what Dolar terms the ‘unbridgeable gap’ between interiority and the ‘exterior’ voice. This was achieved through the application of electronic processes to the live sung line. At first, the effect was subtle, with the introduction at bar 8 of the recorded sample of my voice moving from the *f* to a *gb*’, at the same time as my sung line moved between *f* and *eb*’ (Fig. 4.14).



 Starts 00.53 on *Altra Voce* recording

Fig. 4.14

As I sang, I could hear another voice that I recognised as my own, from the timbres and inflections unique to my voice; I had a memory of singing those notes, of forming those sounds in my ‘inner ear’ as I sounded them out. At the same time, in an unsettling cognitive dissonance, I was acutely aware that it could not be ‘my’ voice as it was dislocated from me in space and time – played through the spatialized speakers at various points in the room, and asynchronous with my experience and memory of singing that phrase. This sensation of dislocation, of simultaneous ‘me but not me’ produced by the recorded samples increased as the piece progressed, as more samples were added to the growing heterophony. As such, the electronics magnify what Derrida describes as the ‘spacing’ or interval at the heart of voice and speech – the hiatus between the inner intention of the vocalist, and the hearing of one’s own voice externally resonating outside the body.⁷³ The realisation of this fundamental

⁷³ Ibid., 85-86.

rupture undermines one's habitual association of the sound of one's own voice with one's sense of contained interiority, bounded and separate from the 'outside' world.

For the listener, similarly, the vocal sound he hears is no longer linked to the singer's body, as the source of the voice. The physical and temporal dislocation is emphasised through the spatialisation of the speakers, the mobility of the sound in the recital space, and the variation and repetition of the recorded samples. Within the recorded samples, the voice's customary links with expression and communication are also eroded, as the vocal fragments consist of sustained vowel sounds, with no recognisable text or words emerging,

Altra Voce further ruptures the association between the particularity of vocal timbre and the presence of an interior human 'self'. The sound of the alto flute, so close in register to that of the mezzo soprano voice, interweaves with the voice throughout the live score in a duet of closely related musical lines. The recordings that are replayed, through the spatialisation of the speakers, at times overlay and fuse the sounds of voice and flute, making it difficult to distinguish one from the other. The two poles of vocal and flute sound set up a field of sonority which is explored throughout the piece, questioning the distinct sonic identities of the flute and voice by blurring and dissolving the boundaries between them. As the ear can no longer reliably distinguish between vocal and instrumental sounds, the listener's automatic identification of a vocal sound is questioned. The sonic spectrum between voice and pure instrumental sound is explored, undermining the listener's assumed identification of vocal sound and voice with the sound of a resonating body and interior human 'self.'

This presentation of the voice, stripped of its customary associations, whether with the interior self of a singer, with music, language or expression, or even with a human body, recalls the commentary of Michel Poizat's analysis of the power of the reified operatic voice:

The radical autonomisation of the voice, its transformation into a detached object that lays claim to the listener's entire receptivity, has made possible the very establishment of the apparatus that is opera. The frequent and at times systematic incongruity of voice, role and physical appearance in the singer – everything that we call operatic

convention - is tolerable only because the spectator's perception of this incongruity dissolves in the moment [of] the singer's lyric flight.⁷⁴

By Poizat's account, this detached 'vocal object' is central to the experience of hearing opera, while the implication of the singer's own subjective presence threatens to intrude on and disrupt the listener's experience; Poizat describes the 'violence' of the listener's reaction on hearing a diva 'tripping on her high C' when he writes that,

When the singer fails in her mission, when she somehow reaffirms her existence not merely as a subject, but as a failing subject, the spectator has to face that incongruity once again.⁷⁵

In its construction, *Altra Voce* stages an apparent contradiction, between the sounding, 'exterior' voice, and the interior, silent 'inner voice' or intention of the vocalist. The piece asks how can these two aspects, so apparently separate in nature, co-exist, and indeed, rely each on the other for definition and constitution? What is found by *Altra Voce*, and what is echoed in Derrida's thesis on text, voice and communication, is a model of the voice formed not of an exclusive binary paradox, but of a dialectical and mutually constitutive interaction between opposing elements. Musically, the piece shows both the links, and the rupture, between the ephemeral experience of one's 'inner voice' forming a musical intention, and its tangible sound in the outside world. We hear the constant interplay between the unique, physical particularity of a resonating 'self', and the abstract, 'universal' signifiers through which the voice is formed and perceived. Both in Derrida's discussion and in *Altra Voce*'s musical and performative meditation on the sounding voice, the case is made that in essence, the fundamental distinction between 'inner' and 'outer' voice, or between abstract, 'universal' systems of meaning, and the tangible sensation of vocal sound is both irreconcilable, and indivisible. In other words, one cannot encounter the exterior voice without the interior; just as one cannot experience the interior voice without reference to the exterior.

In this sense, what *Altra Voce* demonstrates musically and performatively is what Derrida termed 'différance', the 'gap' that necessarily occurs between means of signifying or understanding that would seem somehow indivisible. In an interview with Julia Kristeva, he

⁷⁴ Michel Poizat, 'The Blue Note', *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 3/3 (1991) 195-211.

⁷⁵ Poizat, *Cambridge Opera Journal*, 198.

explained ‘*Différance* is the systematic play of differences, of the traces of differences, of the spacing by means of which elements are related to each other.’⁷⁶ This spacing reflects precisely *Altra Voce*’s exposure of the interior voice’s relationship with the exterior world, or the complex interaction of the punctual present moment with our experience of the passage of time:

Différance also recalls that spacing is temporization, the detour and postponement by means of which intuition, perception, consummation—in a word, the relationship to the present, the reference to a present reality, to a being—are always deferred. Deferred by virtue of the very principle of difference which holds that an element functions and signifies, takes on or conveys meaning, only by referring to another past or future element.⁷⁷

Altra Voce explodes and magnifies this spacing deftly and simply from its earliest bars, with the voice’s opening *f*. As I sang, I heard the intended note internally, before it was sounded out; the recorded sample of this sung *f*, replayed continuously to the end of the piece, formed the external, ‘worldly’ reference point for my voice, the universal signifier against which my ‘internal’ *f* was measured and defined. This inextricable ‘unity’ is for Derrida what makes the voice unique, and ultimately irreducible to constituent elements through the project of intellectual or phenomenological inquiry:

An objective ‘wordly’ science surely can teach us nothing about the essence of the voice. But the unity of sound and voice... is the sole case to escape the distinction between what is worldly and what is transcendental; by the same token, it makes that distinction possible.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Jacques Derrida, ‘Seminology and Grammatology: Interview with Julia Kristeva’, in *Positions*, trans. Alan Bass (London: Continuum, 2002), 24.

⁷⁷ Jacques Derrida, ‘Interview with Julia Kristeva’, 25.

⁷⁸ Derrida, *Speech and Phenomena*, 79.

Conclusion

Berio's *Altra Voce*, in its exhortation to listen for 'another voice' in the voices we hear, amply demonstrates the open voice, as the voice is diffracted into a number of forms; the voice of our own interiority, the voice in our memory, the voice as it proceeds through time, the 'external' physically resounding voice in a room, seemingly separate from an originating body, yet inextricably linked with a human consciousness and subjectivity. While *Passaggio's* *Lei* showed the open voice as it rails, whispers, sings, negotiates and appeals to the 'outside' world of society, politics and the push and pull of power among massed individuals, *Un re in ascolto's* *Protagonista* presents the voice as it resonates in the intersubjective world between two people, interrogating the physical and interpersonal boundaries within the operatic listening encounter, and the dynamics of power, creative agency and listening in that transaction. Here *Altra Voce* and its performance goes further in exploring the multi-layered open voice as it resonates in the interiority of one's individual lived experience. By invoking the elements of time, space and memory in a musical context, *Altra Voce* explores how these intersect with the physically resonating vocal sound to create what we each hear as 'voice', at all times accommodating these multiple, constantly shifting planes of meaning, experience and understanding. As such, the piece performatively enacts what its text calls for: a musical setting in which to 'look', 'listen' and discover both in the performance space, and within our own hearing and memory, a host of 'altra voci' encompassed by the parameters of the open voice.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

Where are we now? ¹

The vocal works by Luciano Berio examined in the course of this thesis cover a considerable period of time, from the early 1960s to 1999. Nonetheless, they can be seen to demonstrate a historical point of radical reconfiguration of the traditional relationships at play between the composer, musical work, performer and listener, and particularly in the understanding of the voice and vocality in musical performance. The pieces themselves can be seen as representative of three distinct epochs of Berio's composing career – the iconoclasm and revolutionary zeal of *Passaggio* (1963) giving way to the established operatic forms of *Un re in ascolto* (1983) composed for and performed in the great opera houses of the world, while *Altra Voce* (1999) sketches a mature, distilled meditation on the interactions of voice, instrument and new computer technology. However, their explorations of the voice do not line up in such a neat order of temporal progression. Rather, each work acknowledges the voice in its vast range of functions and guises – in terms of the unique particularity of an individual, redolent of their specific life and experiences; as the everyday instrument of emotion, expression and communication, underpinning all of the interactions and relationships that shape our lived experience as social human beings; as a dynamic, constantly shifting site of intersection and overlap

¹ 'Where are we now?' The title of David Bowie's first single following nearly a decade of recording and performing silence, released in 2010 with no pre-release publicity or media coverage. In it, Bowie reminisces on various stages of his musical career in his unmistakable, but plaintive, aging voice. His voice asks the question more clearly and poignantly than his words can.

between sound, language and meaning, between the body's interiority and the outside world, between time, memory and situation in space. The voice is heard in these works as the realisation and communication of a coherent intention, either the single voice of an individual subjectivity, or a collective will made manifest in sound or action. In viewing the voice through the prism of these works, this study has explored musical works whose very constructions interrogate the human voice, reflecting voice's multivalency and complexity, displaying a voice that anticipates Martha Feldman's 2015 description of it as 'a dizzying multitude of phenomena and interests.' The picture that emerges then of the voice from these works is less a definable outline of what the voice *is*, but rather a diffraction or explosion of the voice, a demonstration of what the voice *does*, of its capacities, meanings and roles, attributes and effects, a constellation of 'voices', through which the listener navigates according to her own understanding and construction of what she hears. The aesthetic of the 'open work' inherited from the artistic practices of the Italian *neoavanguardia* can be seen as key to this reconfigured vocality. Rather than present a pre-formed 'voice-object' to a passive listener, the voice in these works is presented as a site of intersubjective encounter, an open and mutually constitutive process of collaborative meaning construction between listening and vocalising individuals, in effect, an 'open voice'.

This 'new tradition' of vocality permeates the compositional and performance practices of the Berio works explored in this thesis; its concern with the explosion of the voice's capabilities and implications pre-figures the present day 'vocal turn' in musicology and in wider cultural studies, seen in the proliferation of publications, studies, books, colloquia, conferences and study days focussed on the human voice in all its incarnations.² Such an upsurge in attention to the specifics of the human voice and vocality is to be welcomed by scholars of opera, offering as it does an increasingly divergent array of perspectives from which to consider operatic vocal performance; this plurality of approaches offers not just a way of looking back from our present-day situation at these older repertoires with new eyes, or indeed ears, but also and importantly, it prompts us to re-consider how the composers, performers and producers of these avant-garde works themselves questioned and adopted such vocal plurality and complexity through their musical works and practices.

² Cathy Berberian, 'The New Vocality in Contemporary Music', trans. Francesca Placanica, in Pieter Verstraete, Pamela Karantonis, Francesca Placanica, eds, *Cathy Berberian: pioneer of contemporary vocality* (London: Routledge, 2014).

In the context of this wider ‘corporeal turn’ in music scholarship, and the increased attention to issues of embodiment and performance, this thesis’ close study of three essentially text-based ‘works’ might seem counter-intuitive. However, the works I have taken as objects of study inscribe into their construction a similar awareness of the corporeality and performativity of live vocal music, and as such anticipate, sometimes by over fifty years, the present day directions of musical and scholarly thought. Through their construction, they show the voice as essentially incomplete without the collaborative input of each performer and each listener in every instance of the piece’s live performance, self-consciously leaving the work, and the voice ‘open’ to the gamut of resonating meanings and associations that occur in performance. These works point constantly to their own incompleteness, to the limitations of their own textual parameters, and invite the instigation of each listener and each performer to activate and collaborate in their constant re-creation. What these works paradoxically highlight above all, through their compositional construction, their themes and overarching concerns, is the centrality of the performative instant to an experience of music, of the live, present body and self-identity of each performer and each listener who collaboratively constructs each moment, in every new musical performance.

The open voice – future directions

As a focus of musicological attention, the voice has moved firmly centre stage in recent years, emerging as we have seen through research approaches in the fields of popular and ethno-musicology, as well as the more long-established fields of opera studies and musicological critique. Indeed one of the keynote addresses at the 2017 Royal Musicological Association’s Music and Philosophy Study Group Conference in London, delivered by Martha Feldman, explored issues of vocal technique and vocal ‘brokenness’ in performances by jazz singer Nina Simone, attesting to a widening of methodological approach, and increasing disciplinary interest in accounts of the voice in non-classical repertoires and performances.³ The critical methodology adopted in the course of this

³ Martha Feldman, ‘Voicing the Gap’, Keynote address, *6th Conference of the Royal Musical Association Music and Philosophy Study Group*, King’s College London, 13-14 July 2017,

thesis, that is, adopting a model of performative voice that is 'open' to multiple interpretations and constructions in the collaborative encounter between performer and listener, both reflects and contributes to this broadening of disciplinary perspective on voice studies in music.

The acknowledgement in the field of popular music studies of the multi-layered performative identities at play in a 'pop' music performance suggests a potentially rich avenue of investigation into the vocal personae, strategies, techniques and deliveries of non-classical singers. Taking the starting point of the 'open voice' from which to explore the work of artists such as Tom Waits, PJ Harvey and Björk, for whom their particular vocal timbres and qualities form the centrepiece of their aesthetic and performative identities, offers to shed light on the interplay of compositional intention, bodily and performative presence, musical creation in the event of live performance, and the role and function of the sounding voice within all of these categories.

Equally, taking the approach of 'the open voice' offers a valuable path of inquiry into repertoire more usually seen as 'classical' or 'art music', in which the centrality and importance of the sounding voice to the structural and thematic workings of a piece have been customarily overlooked. Thus as we have seen in the case of Luciano Berio's repertoire, placing the model of the 'open voice' at the centre of critical and analytical investigation of each piece offers rich insights into the musical and aesthetic impact of these works; a similar approach to other works of contemporary 'classical' music in which the sounding voice plays a key role, such as the vocal work of John Cage *Song Books* (1970) or Pauline Oliveros' *Sound Patterns* (1968) would illuminate the centrality and complexity of the roles of the physical sounds and timbres of the performing voice to the construction, creation and re-creation of these significant works of twentieth century musical repertoire.

Final Words

This definite 'vocal turn' within musicology can be read as reflecting a wider cultural shift, traced through recent scholarly moves in fields from phenomenology to cultural studies

<<http://musicandphilosophy.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Programme-Final-post.pdf>>, accessed 15th August, 2017.

to performance studies to cognitive neuroscience towards a conception of voice as open, various and collaborative in its construction. Cultural practice and discourse in the humanities and human sciences have reflected a sea change from a tradition of 'flattened' textually based approaches to knowledge towards accounts rooted in embodied, particular and experiential 'ways of knowing'. What they reflect however is a historical moment of cultural re-configuration that has been played out, 'performatively' enacted, interrogated and demonstrated through the creative practices of musicians, artists and writers, over the course of the past half century, prefiguring and paving the way for the discursive 'corporeal' and 'vocal' turns we see today. Nevertheless, within musicology there remains a cultural resistance to examining the voice 'in situ', that is, in the context of its specific examination through the realisation of musical works and their performances; of looking to musical practice to suggest perspectives from which discourse can take its lead.

To this day, performative, artistic and musical practice continues to explore and interrogate the myriad potential forms and experiences of the human voice in ways that lead and exceed musicology's traditionally text based models of understanding, though even now such work tends to be viewed as experimental, ancillary or unconnected with a classical musicological culture, or even entirely beyond its remit of traditionally understood music.

The Turner prize winning entry for 2010 is a case in point, consisting as it did of the electronic sound of the artist's voice singing traditional songs from her childhood, recorded in specific locations from her home city, and replayed through speakers in situ in an art gallery. Sally Philipsz' piece *Lowlands* (2010) consciously infused the vocal sound with an almost infinite network of references and meanings, from her own identity as Scottish woman singing a 16th century traditional lament, to her memories of childhood experiences of the song sung to her, to the resonant, echoing sites underneath the bridges of her home town in Glasgow, where she recorded herself singing.⁴ In ways highly reminiscent of collaborative works of Luciano Berio and Cathy Berberian, the work plays with and critiques the idea of hallowed institutional spaces, whether the art gallery or the opera house, and explores the point of intersection between a voice that is redolent with embodied particularly, self-hood and memory with the dissociated, anonymous sonic

⁴ 'Turner Prize: Susan Philipsz wins with *Lowlands Away*', *BBC News* [website] <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-11928557>, accessed 5th August 2016; Lena Corner, 'The art of noise: 'sculptor in sound' Susan Philipsz', *The Guardian* [website] <http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2010/nov/14/susan-philipsz-turner-prize-2010-sculptor-in-sound>, accessed 5th August 2016.

material of electronic vocal recordings. The piece received the Turner prize, the prestigious British award for 'a visual artist under the age of fifty, and while it was reviewed extensively by visual artists and 'art experts', it received no attention from the musical or musicological community, despite its apparently shared concerns with the sounding, performative human voice.⁵ Closer to 'musical' home, performances and recordings by group such as the Vocal Constructivists, or projects like Bill Drummond's choir 'The17' attest to the motivation of musicians coming from both rock and classical music backgrounds to explore the voice's performative potential to its fullest extent, including and 'liberating' elements of voice traditionally excised and 'silenced' in popular and classical music practices, and in related musicological discourse.⁶

What this thesis has demonstrated is the potential for exploratory, performative works to frame and interrogate the human voice in a musical setting, to show the voice in a multiplicity of forms and guises, and to invite the listener to be an active participant in its understanding and construction. What is also made evident is the perennial shortfall between discursive accounts of the voice in a traditional musical and musicological context, and its infinitely varied and dynamic realisation through self-consciously exploratory musical practice. The spirit of vocal innovation and exploration of Berio's works persists in today's experimental and marginal musical and performative practice, displaying a self-conscious, vibrant and often playful critique of our understandings of the

⁵ 'Susan Philipsz' work makes you think about place, space, memory and presence,' Adrian Searle, 'Turner Prize winner Susan Philipsz: an expert view', *The Guardian* [website], <<http://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2010/dec/06/turner-prize-susan-philipz>> accessed 5th August, 2016.

⁶ The Vocal Constructivists – A London based group of singers, musicians and artists who perform experimental vocal works using conventional notation, graphic scores and other media. Works span from the nineteen sixties to the present day. Performances include works by Cornelius Cardew, John Cage, Meredith Monk, Pauline Oliveros, Anthony Braxton, Ron Kuivila, Lauren Redhead and C.C. Hutchins. See *The Vocal Constructivists* [website], <http://www.vocalconstructivists.com/> accessed 5th August 2016; See CD released in 2014, *Walking Still*, at *Innova Recordings* [website] <<http://www.innova.mu/albums/vocal-constructivists/walking-still>>. Accessed 15th August 2015 ; The17 - 'The17 is a choir. It writes and performs improvised music scores and does not make recordings of its performances. Anyone who wants to can become a member of The17 by joining a performance on its UK Coast-to-Coast or World City-to-City tours. The17 was founded by Bill Drummond as a development of his interest in choral music, after hearing the music of Arvo Pärt. It also follows Drummond's belief that 'all recorded music has run its course' and that music should be a performed art form, 'celebrating time, place and occasion and nothing to do with something trapped in the iPod in your pocket'. Bill Drummond, 'A brief but evolving history of The17', *The 17* [website], <http://www.the17.org/about.php>, accessed October 14th 2015; *Imagine Waking up Tomorrow and All Music has Disappeared*, Dir.Stefan Schwietert, Music/Documentary (2015 Maximage: Flying Moon Filmproduktion, 2015), <http://www.imaginewakinguptomorrowandallmusicshasdisappeared.com/> accessed 14th October, 2015; <<http://www.edfilmfest.org.uk/films/2015/imagine-waking-up-tomorrow-and-all-music-has-disappeared>>, accessed 14th October, 2015.

voice; academic musicology's current vocal turn could benefit enormously from this model of open-ended, diffracted and plural understandings of voice. Such a valuable reciprocal exchange between discourse and praxis in vocal research and understanding remains an aspiration for scholars, musicians, performers and researchers of the musical voice, with efforts to connect research and scholarship to performance and musical practice often met with suspicion and resistance in academic circles. In a recent email exchange, an academic musicologist and performer with the experimental vocal group the Vocal Constructivists wrote 'I was thinking of the experience you and I had recently, in which we were accused of using our practice to support our academic careers. Well, why not, I thought!' It seems the interdisciplinary spirit of Berio's collaborative vocal compositions, between composers, performers, scholars, singers, philosophers and listeners, remains something to which we as musicians and scholars of music must still aspire in the twenty first century.

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Appendix I – CD/Recording of Altra Voce Performance



Online Access:

<https://soundcloud.com/user-381834598/altra-voce-1999-luciano-berio>